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ABSTRACT

A crucial question for evaluating nationally or internationally implemented programs is whether local adaptations detract from program quality and effectiveness. An evaluation examined the program successes and challenges encountered in the first 5 years of Home-Start in the Netherlands, a home-based family support program for families with young children intended to prevent everyday problems or stressful circumstances developing into major or long-term problems. Local programs are embedded in a regional and national consultation and support structure. The core of the program involves volunteers, parents themselves, who visit families of young children an average of once a week to provide practical help, friendship, and support. The volunteers are trained by a coordinator, with whom they meet monthly. Eleven projects serving 190 families with 140 volunteers participated in this evaluation. Data were gathered through a variety of methods, including questionnaires, personal and group interviews, and document analysis. Findings were derived for families (including need for support, use of services, and program satisfaction), for volunteers (including training participation, personal program impact, family contacts, and support activities), and the projects (focusing on profiles of projects begun at different phases of the program). It was concluded that Home-Start has proved itself as a practical, feasible method that can be transferred to a variety of communities and that attention must be given to maintaining the integrity of the method in order to guarantee a quality program. (Contains 35 references.) (KB)

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Programme evaluation
Home-Start

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Home-Start between childhood and maturity

A programme evaluation

Utrecht NIZW
December 1999

Anke van Dijke and Linda Terpstra
Magna van Soest (translation)

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Preface

This programme evaluation refers to the introduction and implementation of Home-Start in the Netherlands. Over twenty-five years ago this method for family support was created in the UK as an addition to the professional care and service provision. In the past few years the programme was introduced in various countries within and without Europe.
In the Netherlands Home-Start was set up in three pilot projects. During the experimental stage the programme appeared to be both successful and effective. Research showed that the parenting stress in families diminishes and that the parenting competence and confidence of parents increase. It was not long before the method became well-known on a national level and in the meantime Home-Start projects have been initiated in many locations.

But how can a successful programme remain effective? How do we prevent it from becoming diluted? A method or programme is seldom carried out exactly according to the guidelines. For due to the bottlenecks that Home-Start staff members encounter in everyday practice, they will often make concessions to the quality requirements. Although there should always be room within a programme for adaptations to the local situation, there is still the crucial question whether these adaptations do or do not detract from the quality and effectiveness. For in the long run a programme will run the risk of losing its own identity and becoming a colourless project.

This programme evaluation describes the bottlenecks and successes that occurred in the first five years, after the introduction of Home-Start in the Netherlands. An important finding is that although the programme is no longer in its childhood stage, neither is it grown up. It is, as it were, in the process of coming of age. A vulnerable stage in development.
The publication is a complete and unaltered translation from the Dutch into the English language. The text has not been adapted. Therefore you will be allowed a look behind the scenes of the Dutch stage. Typically Dutch concepts have not been translated literally but were described as much as possible, in order to enable readers unfamiliar with the Dutch context to grasp the general idea.

We hope that the processes that we experienced in the Netherlands and the subsequent lessons we learned will also be a source of inspiration for people outside the Netherlands.
The programme evaluation is not just relevant to persons involved in Home-Start but also to other persons involved in family support, social support structures around families, parenting support and youth policy. In addition, this publication provides information to those involved in development of methods and implementation.

This programme evaluation was carried out by the Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare / NIZW. This is an independent institute in the Netherlands that enables institutions and professionals in the care and welfare sector to respond to developments in society and to guarantee the quality of the work in the sector. The NIZW –engaged in development of methods- was involved with the introduction and implementation of Home-Start in the Netherlands.

Utrecht, December 1999
Linda Terpstra and Anke van Dijke

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Introduction

Home-Start has made a name for itself in the Netherlands in a brief span of time. Mainly because the method is congenial and has appeal. It wants to prevent that everyday problems in families with young children develop into serious or long-term problems. Thus Home-Start wants to contribute to a 'good start' for children. The programme does not focus on the children in a family or on the parent-child relationship but on the parents.
In many families with children in a pre-school age problems seem to be related to the lack of significant social contacts and the lack of recognition and appreciation, causing mothers to feel at a loss or unable to cope (Van Dijke and Terpstra 1996a). In short, a lack of social and emotional support. Social support is pre-eminently part of the domain of the informal network of friends, family, neighbours and acquaintances. The professional circuit is not the most suitable to respond to this need for social support. Programmes such as Home-Start that are being carried out by volunteers, however, do seem to be able to play a major part in this respect. They avail themselves of 'fundamental human qualities' such as warm-heartedness, a sense of humour and optimism. Home-Start provides practical help, friendship and support to families in stressful situations.

The programme's possibilities have been widely recognised in the meantime. Both by the Ministry of VWS and by provincial or local authorities, support organisations, and executive organisations. It is demonstrated in research by the University of Amsterdam (Hermanns, et. al. 1997) that the programme realises its targets.

The Ministry of VWS asked the NIZW to carry out a programme evaluation of Home-Start. In the Netherlands experiments regarding Home-Start were conducted from 1993 to 1998. In 1998 the shift had to be made from experimental stage to a service provision that every institution in the field of care and welfare could perform. The programme evaluation is intended to map out the developments, bottlenecks, and successes from the experimental stage and the extended experimental stage (1993 – 1998). A programme evaluation is not free of engagements. Possible outcome may be that a method does not live up to expectations, entails undesirable side effects or that the means employed are not adequate. However, it is the intention to investigate which fundamental conditions are necessary to carry out the method and to give an incentive to the quality and integrity of the method.

In many places there are initiatives to set up Home-Start projects. It appears however, that it is not always simple to stick to the guidelines, points of departure and quality requirements of the method. In practice dilemmas soon arise: is the method predominant or does one deviate from it for pragmatic reasons. An example: local authorities claim to be in favour of the programme but decision-making on subsidy grants is forever being put off. Meanwhile, a potential local co-ordinator has been found. She does not object to starting as a volunteer or starting off on fewer hours for the time being. The project is faced with the dilemma of either postponing the start and stick to the quality requirement that a co-ordinator must be paid and be employed for a minimum of 20 hours, or whilst awaiting the subsidy, allowing the co-ordinator to make a start on a voluntary basis. Time and again everyday reality contains situations in which it has to be decided whether to go strictly by the guidelines, points of departure and quality requirements as described in the Manual, or to put these aside (for a while). A

crucial question in this is always whether 'adjustments' will or will not be detrimental to the method's quality and effectiveness.

Chapter 1 describes the theoretical background of the method and gives an outline of a short history of Home-Start. In chapter 2 the method is described in a nutshell. The setting up and objective of the programme evaluation are described in chapter 3. In chapters 4, 5 and 6 the focus is on the parents, the volunteers and the projects, respectively. Chapter 7 is a key chapter because here it will be investigated to what extent the method is being 'upheld' in everyday practice. Or, in other words, the practice is being compared to the guidelines, points of departure and quality requirements of the method. Finally, the last chapter contains a summary and the main conclusions of the programme evaluation. The chapters 7 and 8 contain recommendations for the future.

Finally we would like to thank a number of people who have contributed to the realisation of this programme evaluation. First of all we want to thank the families, the volunteers, the co-ordinators and support officials for all the information they provided, and the Ministry of VWS, directorate of Youth Policy, that enabled this programme evaluation. Tineke de Haas conducted and processed a large number of the interviews. Furthermore we benefited enormously from the comments of the 'reading party' that consisted of: Ina Bakker, Joop Berding, Jan van Dijk, Marijke Galama, Jo Hermanns, Loes Meijer, Huub Schreurs, Math Wierts and Annemarie van Wijmen.
With this programme evaluation the Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare / NIZW hopes to provide the tools for a method that is not just congenial, but also effective and that actually supports parents and children in stressful circumstances.

1 Background

Introduction

In youth policy there is a shift in emphasis from care to prevention. Increasingly, problems with adolescents and youngsters –such as dropping out from school, substance abuse, aggressive or withdrawn behaviour and juvenile delinquency- are being viewed as an expression of problems in the previous age periods. That is why it is being advocated to start as early as possible with preventative activities. Point of departure is, that a good start is beneficial to the development of children. That is why it was made a policy goal to achieve that the first years of life are positive.

The balance model

The theoretical insights used in the balance model (Bakker et al., 1997, 1998) are at present widely accepted points of departure for prevention. The Home-Start method is based on these points of departure. Point of departure of the balance model is, that development and parenting are transactional processes that are influenced by many factors. This is not just about the micro-level of the family but also the meso-level of the immediate environment and the macro-level of society as a whole. At all these levels there may be factors that contain risks for the development and upbringing, but there may also be protective factors. On the micro-level this refers to parent- and child- and family factors. On the meso-level this refers to social family factors such as isolation and social support and to social environment factors such as the neighbourhood atmosphere and the structure of the service provisions. And finally, on the macro-level this refers to socio-economical, cultural and society-related factors that can be translated into for example poverty, discrimination and unemployment. Risk factors can increase the burden of parents and children; protective factors provide a counterbalance against the influence of risk factors.

The balance between burden and coping capacity is essential for the quality of parenting and development. The burden is the combination of tasks parents must perform. These tasks go beyond parenting in the strict sense. Parents (and children) have other tasks to perform, such as acquiring the necessities of life, maintaining social contacts, domestic and social duties. Here risk factors or drastic events can give extra stress and thus increase the workload and the burden. This may refer to illness, a handicap or a difficult temper in parent(s) or child. But additional stress can also be the result of social and material factors such as social isolation, poverty and unemployment. Finally, (traumatic) events such as a death or divorce can also increase the burden considerably.
In addition, for the quality of parenting it is not just the parents' parenting ability that matters, it is also the balance between coping capacity and burden. The most competent parent can at times 'be unable to cope' due to too much tension or stressful circumstances in other areas of life. If, for example, a family is 'knee-deep in debt', debt restructuring can be a major contribution to stress reduction and a more relaxed atmosphere within the family.
The burden is the sum of tasks (concerning development and life) and stressors (threatening factors) that a child and parents are faced with. The coping capacity is the combination of abilities and protective factors that enables parents and children to face these tasks and risk factors. Generally speaking, these are a mirror image of the risk factors: adequate income, jobs, a social network surrounding a family, social skills and such.

The balance model (Bakker et al. 1997) shows that problems cannot always be solved at the microlevel of children, parents or family. And it is not always the parents who are at fault, both in the child and in the (social and society-based) environment there can be major causes for the problems. This also applies to possible solutions. Here it is a case of mobilising protective factors and decreasing risk factors.

The influence of social and society-based factors

On the level of children, parents and families quite a lot of research has been conducted into the factors that influence parenting and development. For example, a study into the effects of family conflict or divorce. Less attention has been paid to the influence of social and society-based factors. It is established in several studies that the social context not only influences the behaviour and development of children but also the parents' parenting style. This refers, amongst other things, to poverty, being run down, discrimination and ethno-centred behaviour, little social support and a lack of social cohesion in the neighbourhoods. These factors do not directly influence (in a causal sense) the creation of parenting and development problems, but they do determine to a considerable extent the conditions or framework conditions within which parenting takes place.

Social support structures

Lack of social support influences parenting behaviour negatively. From the perspective of parenting the fact that in the past decades the coping capacity of the social support structure consisting of family, friends and neighbours has decreased can be characterised as a bottleneck. The developments of the past few decades have changed the composition of the informal networks and reduced coping capacities. This is related to:

- A considerable increase of geographical mobility, as a result of which people often do not live in the same neighbourhood or town as their relatives or friends.
- A strong decrease of the size of families and family contexts, as a result of which mutual help and support can be divided among fewer persons and the coping capacities of the family and relatives have decreased.
- Individualisation and privatisation of people's personal lives, as a result of which it has increasingly become the standard that you do not interfere in other people's lives.
- Women's entering the job market as a result of which women were disproportionately burdened and the coping capacities of the informal system of care and support were reduced.

For families with young children the decreased coping capacities of social support contexts has drastic consequences. There are signs that large groups of parents are not receiving the support they need (Klaver and Leseman 1996; Terpstra and Van Dijke 1997). Mothers cannot, or but sparingly, appeal to friends, acquaintances, neighbours or relatives. This does not only refer to 'being able to speak your mind' but also to practical matters such as an address for childminding or staying overnight or someone to help when one is busy or ill. To be specific: the neighbour is at work, your mother lives at the other side of the country, your sister is having a divorce and has enough on her plate, your friend is only just coping with her own two children and a part-time job and your husband does not see what the fuss is all about. Increasingly mothers feel they are left to fend for themselves. This often results in tension and stress, that reflect on the parenting atmosphere or the parenting relation between parents and children.

There is hardly any preventive service provision responding to this. This was one of the reasons why Home-Start was of interest to the care and welfare sector. Because professional care and service provision often pays but little attention to everyday matters that can be a burden to parents, Home-Start has focused on these everyday situations of parents. One of the method's key points of departure is that parents are not just the raisers of children. On all areas of life situations can occur that are a source of stress and that reflect on the parenting. On the one hand, Home-Start focuses on increasing parents' confidence en reinforcing their possibilities; on the other hand on reinforcing the social support structures around the family.

Social support can act as a buffer for burdening experiences in other areas of life. According to Hermanns (1992) social support is the most crucial element of parenting support to parents. Lack of social support has a negative effect on parenting behaviour. Vice versa, receiving social support appears to have an important buffer effect for problems with regard to parenting, behaviour and development.

That is why it is increasingly advocated to allow professionals to play a supporting part in the creation of informal or social support: the professional circuit as 'facilitator for' or 'manager of' the informal circuit. Methods such as Home-Start provide a concrete implementation of this new way of thinking.

A short history of Home-Start

Home-Start originated over 25 years ago in England, by way of addition to professional care- and service provision. In the context of policy developments that took place in child care, the method drew attention in the Netherlands.

From mid 1993 to 1 January 1996 experiments were carried out with three projects in Maastricht, Heerlen and Venray. The Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare / NIZW was in charge of the projects. In addition, the NIZW, together with Symbiose, was involved as external developer of methods in the pilot projects; local and regional organisations for welfare and home care were involved as internal developers of methods.

The three pilots had to provide answers to two questions. On the one hand, if the programme is also effective in the Netherlands and on the other, if it is an addition to the existing service provision in the Netherlands. Both questions were answered in the affirmative at the end of the experimental phase. And yet there was a need to extend the experimental phase. This need was felt by the national project advice group, the Ministry of VWS and the NIZW and also by the co-ordinators and support officials. First of all, because an extended experimental phase provided the opportunity to study a number of questions that had not been answered yet in the experimental phase. For example, does Home-Start also 'work' in larger towns or in rural areas such as the Flevopolder. The parties also wanted to learn if the method was suitable for black and minority ethnic families.

A second reason was that although Home-Start had proved its right to exist, it was not yet 'ready for use'. A support structure had not yet been set up, there was no registration system and a system for quality monitoring had yet to be developed. In addition, a number of 'practical matters had to be settled', such as more formal agreements on the relationship Home-Start UK and Home-Start NL and the adaptation of training for co-ordinators, the volunteers course and the Manual, and –finally- publishing the programme on a broader scale.

A third reason was that in everyday practice there were situations in which support officials, co-ordinators and volunteers racked their brains on the question how to translate the guidelines and

points of departure of the method into practice. It was felt that there were still too many questions unanswered to disseminate and implement the method on a larger scale.

That is why the experimental phase was extended by two years: from 1 January 1996 to 1 January 1998. In the extended experimental phase, too, the NIZW was involved in Home-Start in the capacity of national project manager. In this period (1996-1998) projects were initiated in Amersfoort, Dordrecht, Emmen, Groningen, Leiden, Roermond, Rotterdam and Venlo. The programme evaluation refers to the projects that were operational in the experimental phase and in the extended experimental phase (1993-1998). On 1-1-1998 the NIZW's role as national project manager ended. The role that the NIZW fulfilled in the consultation and support structure was then transferred to institutions from the field of work, that had been involved in the development, implementation and extension of Home-Start in the extended experimental phase. In 1998 the NIZW's role restricted itself to carrying out the programme evaluation and composing new versions of the Manual and the Preparatory Course for volunteers.

In the course of 1998 projects were initiated in Almere, Alphen aan den Rijn, Apeldoorn, Den Haag, Zwijndrecht (twinning with Dordrecht), Ede, Gouda, Hengelo, Middelburg, Rotterdam-Delftshaven, (start early spring 1999) and Walcheren. As of 1 January 1999 there are 22 Home-Start projects in the Netherlands.
In many projects, in the execution or in the support, there are collaborations between organisations from various sectors, amongst which: socio-cultural work (welfare foundations); child and youth care (child care institutions); health care (municipal health services, health centres); mental health care (Regional Institutions for Outpatients Mental Health Care, RIAGG); home care (home care institutions); the volunteers sector (the national association Humanitas); Child Development and Parenting Counselling; FIOM; children's day care services; and VWS institutions (support organisations in the welfare sector).

2 Home-Start in a nutshell

Home-Start is focusing on families –with at least one child under the age of six- that are in need of support. Volunteers, who themselves have experience in raising children, support the families.

Mode of operation and principles of work

The volunteers' visits to families are the core of the method. The frequency depends on the mother's needs and the possibilities of the volunteer: on average once a week one morning or afternoon. In the initial phase the frequency is higher, on average, than in the final phase. In addition, many volunteers provide the mother with an opportunity to call them at home if the mother feels it is all just too much. The three pillars of volunteering are: practical help, friendship and support.

Key element in this is that the method makes use of 'fundamental human qualities' such as hope, optimism, time, attention, the willingness to give someone a leg up and a sense of humour. That is why the volunteers are requested to form ties of friendship with a mother. So Home-Start is primarily making use of human capital or human potential, not of professional skills.

A second key element is that the programme does not focus on what goes wrong, but on what is going well: the strong and positive sides of a family. Furthermore, it is Home-Start's starting point that in principle every parent is 'sufficiently equipped' to raise children.

A third key element is the demand-oriented approach. The mother is in charge: she indicates in what areas she would like to be supported, she determines what the support will be like and how long she intends to use it. Points of departure here are the volunteer's possibilities and boundaries.

A fourth element, finally, is that a volunteer must have time. In this the programme distinguishes itself from professional care and service provision, in which time has become a very scarce article.

Home-Start uses 'time' and 'friendship' as important symbols to position itself with respect to other forms of care and service provision. The work of the volunteers in the families is structured by several principles that are easy to transfer. The volunteer:

- provides support, friendship and practical assistance
- visits families in their homes, where the dignity and identity of every individual can be respected and protected;
- makes parents understand that it is not unusual if there are problems in raising and bringing up children en emphasises what is (still) going well;
- forms a relationship with a family, in which there is time and understanding for each other; the approach is flexible in order to match the various needs and situations;
- reinforces the strengths of parents and the emotional well-being of their children;
- encourages families to extend their social networks and make an (efficient) use of the existing support structures, services and provisions.

The way in which the support is taking shape is not standardised. There is no previously set programme or phased procedure that a family will have to follow. This also applies to the objectives, effects and results. The method primarily focuses on the attitude of the volunteers and the co-ordinators. In addition framework conditions and guidelines were laid down for the work within the families and for the support of volunteers and co-ordinators.

Consultation and support structure

Home-Start is a programme constructed in layers: the projects are embedded in a regional and national consultation- and support structure. The consultation and support structure has a function in the context of quality improvement and quality warranting and in the support of projects in putting into practice the points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements.

At all levels there are preparatory courses, group meetings and individual counselling. The volunteers are given a preparatory course by the co-ordinator, meet the co-ordinator once a month on average and receive individual supervision once every six week on average.
The co-ordinators and support officials also start with a preparatory course. Then there are meetings for co-ordinators per region, with the regional support official. In addition the co-ordinators can appeal to the supporter for their own project.
The same applies to regional support officials. They too attend a preparatory course and have meetings with the other regional support officials and with the national support official(s).
Thus developments are combined at the local level and insight into success factors and bottlenecks is developed. These are based on development of methods of work and quality improvement.
At the same time, this consultation and support structure aims to 'keep the method intact'. Following this, the national and regional support officials play an important part in supporting the co-ordinators in translating the method's points of departure into the practice. Thus they contribute to Home-Start's identity within the projects.
In short, the consultation and support structure has a function in the context of quality improvement, quality warranting and support of the projects.

On behalf of the support of the first three pilot projects employees of Symbiose (then Liose still) attended a preparatory course in the UK. Two employees of the Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare / NIZW, too, attended this course, as did the first three co-ordinators. In the pilot phase Symbiose and the NIZW implemented the consultation and support structure.

When after three years of experimenting the go-ahead sign was given to extension in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray, a start was made with courses for co-ordinators and support officials during the extended experimental phase. There was no prior selection of participants. In practice, this resulted in the co-ordinators of new projects attending the course, as did employees of organisations that wanted to play a part in the dissemination of Home-Start. This concerned in particular employees of provincial support organisations and employees of a national volunteers' organisation. In addition to 14 co-ordinators a total of 25 'supporters' were trained in the experimental phase.

Table 1
Number of support officials and co-ordinators according to type of organisation (n=39) (abs.)

Counsellors of support organisations in the welfare sector	4
Counsellors of a national association for volunteers work	15
Staff employees of local welfare foundations	3
Policy and project employees of a national association for volunteers' work	3
Co-ordinators	14

The points of departure and principles of work that apply to the work within the families also apply to the organisation culture and structure. Point of departure is that time and friendship are the guiding principle at all levels: not just for the contact between the volunteer and the mother, and between co-ordinator and volunteers, but also for the contact between co-ordinators and support officials.
The organisation concept is based on the idea of the learning organisation and on the equality of all parties involved. Consultation structures are set up so as to enable reflection on the work, in the families and on the organisation, at all levels. Point of departure is that all parties involved –from volunteers to national support structure- contribute to the development of the method. This requires an open attitude, the willingness to exchange with others and to achieve consensus on developments with regard to the method, framework conditions and the consultation and support structure. The regional support officials are the link between the projects and the national level.

In the meantime Home-Start projects have been set up in eight countries. In 1996 an international meeting took place for the first time, at which all these countries were represented. Here is was decided to arrive at an international platform on behalf of exchange and quality monitoring: Home-Start International. At this moment a further implementation of this idea is being developed, by means of fund raising and the development of an international agreement for all parties involved that want to (will) carry out Home-Start in the near future.

3 Setting up of the programme evaluation

Question

In this programme evaluation Home-Start's actual functioning is being evaluated. The way in which Home Start is being implemented in everyday practice is the object of research. Key question is whether Home-Start is what it is pretending to be, i.e. a form of support in the home, carried out by volunteers, according to set guidelines and points of departure, on behalf of a specific target group and with certain effects. In this context the following questions were studied:

- Does Home-Start reach the intended target group?
- Is the method being carried out as intended?
- Are the intended effects being realised?

Home-Start was developed in the UK. There the system of professional assistance and service provision is less extensive than in the Netherlands. This is one of the reasons that England has a definite volunteers culture in this respect. There is a long tradition in the recruitment of volunteers and in fund raising. The Netherlands, on the other hand, has an extensive system of professional care, assistance and service provision. Here there is a far less definite volunteers culture. In addition, the Netherlands has no tradition of fundraising in this area. Care and welfare in the Netherlands are financed almost exclusively by the various authorities. As a result of this, the context in which Home-Start is being developed in the Netherlands differs considerably from the English context.

At the same time the Dutch context requires adaptations in the programme management. In the UK Home-Start has its own organisation with a national office, regional support officials and local projects. Because of the extensive infrastructure regarding care and welfare, a separate Home-Start organisation in the Netherlands is neither necessary nor advisable. Point of departure for the management, extension and implementation is that the programme is incorporated into the existing infrastructure. The programme evaluation must establish if adaptations to the Dutch situation are not detrimental to the method's quality. That is why –departing from the preconditions in the Dutch care and welfare sector- this programme evaluation focuses on the question if the pilot projects succeeded in leaving the core of the method intact. In this context the programme evaluation must provide the tools for the question how the extension and the implementation of Home-Start are to be effected without affecting the method.

This concerns information relevant to:

- the determination of the (minimal) framework conditions and quality requirements that projects have to meet;
- the elaboration in closer detail of the consultation and support structure;
- the development of a system of quality warranting;
- the way in which the extension and the implementation are to be realised.

Earlier on it was stated that a programme evaluation is not free of engagements. In order to be able to make evaluating pronouncements, a frame of reference is necessary. The frame of reference we are using here to test the practice study consists of the guidelines, points of departure and quality requirements of the method, quantitative and qualitative research carried out in the experimental

phase and the extended experimental phase and, finally, the process description of the first three pilot projects. (See also the paragraph 'Frame of reference for the practice study')

Object of research

The programme evaluation refers to the period of mid 1993 to 1 January 1998. Objects of research are the eleven projects that were initiated in this period in Amersfoort, Dordrecht, Emmen, Groningen, Heerlen, Leiden, Maastricht, Roermond, Rotterdam, Venlo and Venray. In addition the regional and national support structure was object of research. Expressed in number the programme evaluation refers to:

- 190 families
- 140 volunteers
- 12 co-ordinators
- 10 support officials.

The eleven projects

In the experimental phase (1993 – 1996) eleven pilot projects were set up in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray. In 1996 the three pioneers were initially reinforced by a project in Roermond, set up and financed by local welfare work. Subsidised by the Ministry of VWS the national support organisation for volunteers work Humanitas set up three projects in Amersfoort, Emmen and Rotterdam in 1996. In 1997 this volunteers organisation, in co-operation with S&O Zuid-Holland and the support organisation JanZeuven set up another two projects in Dordrecht and Leiden. At the end of 1997, finally, Home-Start Venlo and Home-Start Groningen were created. The projects initiated in 1997 have been included in the presentation of data sometimes, and sometimes they have not. Some of these projects for example still had to make a start with the supporting of families or had only just begun to do so. Therefore it has to be noted here that the data of the projects cannot simply be compared to each other. If only for the fact that some projects have been operational for 4.5 years and others for only a few months. But the framework conditions for the projects, too, differ.

The following table presents a number of core data of the projects that were operational in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase.
The following chapter will deal with the significance of the presented data.
The data refer to:

- the year in which the actual support of families was started (some projects require more take-off time than others: there may be a considerable gap between the start of a project and the moment at which a start can be made with the support of families);
- the number of families supported per project;
- the number of volunteers that attended a volunteers course per project;
- the number of co-ordinators the project had at its disposal at the end of the experimental phase;
- the sector from which the projects were set up (in the experimental phase projects were carried out from the welfare sector, home care and the volunteers sector).

Table 2
Core data per project per 01-01-1998 (abs.)

Location	start support	families	volunteers	co-ordinators	sector
Heerlen	94	33	22	2	welfare work
Maastricht	94	35	20	2	welfare work
Venray	95	42	25	1	home care
Amersfoort	96	30	31	1	volunteers work
Roermond	97	19	26	2	welfare work
Rotterdam	97	7	16	1	volunteers work
Emmen	97	12	11	1	volunteers work
Dordrecht*	97	5	9	1	volunteers work
Leiden*	98	-	7	1	volunteers work
Venlo	98	-	5	1	welfare work
Groningen	98	-	6	1	volunteers work

* support by youth care / welfare sector

Methods of research

There is a certain area of tension between the nature of a programme such as Home-Start and the systematic collection of data on behalf of their evaluation. Simply because the actual problems of each family are the point of departure for the support, as a result of which the support is of a different nature in every family. The objective differs per family and with it the question if and when the support has been effective (see also Hermanns et. al. 1997).

The same applies to the support structure as here too there is a 'from the bottom-up' approach. In the support of volunteers the questions and bottlenecks of volunteers are point of departure and regarding the co-ordinators the questions and bottlenecks of the co-ordinators. In short, the contents vary, the process varies but also the criteria for success.

And yet not everything varies. Home-Start has clear guidelines and requirements regarding attitude and culture, formation, support and consultation structure and such.

With regard to Home-Start's quality 'hard' data can be looked into, such as the frequency of the volunteers meetings, the full-time hours of the co-ordinator or for example the question if the co-ordinators receive the support at a regional level. Home-Start's actual functioning however, cannot simply be evaluated by means of 'hard' data. More qualitative data are indispensable for the evaluation of 'grass-root' programmes. How, for instance, is a concept such as 'friendship', 'made viable'? To what extent are co-ordinators and volunteers satisfied with the support they are receiving? In addition to gathering quantitative data other methods of research have therefore acquired an important position. On behalf of the programme evaluations both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered, by means of:

- written questionnaires;
- face-to-face interviews'
- group interviews with volunteers;
- registration data of the projects;
- analysis of project documents, such as annual reports;

- analysis of notes of meetings;
- study visits;
- attending consultation meetings.

Questionnaire in writing and registration data

All projects have at their disposal the registration data of families, referring agencies and volunteers. These data were gathered on behalf of the programme evaluation (anonymously). This, amongst other things, refers to the background information on families and volunteers and on data regarding the support.

By means of written questionnaires additional data on the families, volunteers, co-ordinators and support officials were gathered. Besides this, questionnaires were filled in by employees of the national bureau and by the consultants of the volunteers organisation involved. This refers to both quantitative and qualitative data. For the programme evaluation a total of 365 questionnaires were filled in.

Table 3
Sum total of questionnaires in writing filled in (n=365 abs.)

Families	190
Volunteers	149
Co-ordinators	11
Support officials	10
Employees national bureau of the involved volunteers organisation	2
Consultants of the involved volunteers organisation	3

Personal interviews

The informative value of the quantitative data can be increased considerably by qualitative information that renders depth and clarification to the quantitative data. That is why, in addition to the questionnaires in writing, a number of personal interviews were conducted as well by means of half-structured questionnaires. A total of 85 interviews were conducted.

Table 4
Conducted group interviews and personal interviews (n=85 abs.)

Half-structured interviews with co-ordinators	12
Half-structured interviews with support officials	9
Half-structured interviews with volunteers	11
Half-structured group interviews with volunteers	20
Half-structured interviews with black and minority ethnic families	20
Half-structured interviews with native Dutch families	13

All in all 33 mothers were interviewed. The native Dutch mothers were selected by means of a non-select random test from the files of native Dutch families receiving support in 1997. On the basis of this random check three native families were interviewed per project. In the three starting projects in Leiden, Dordrecht and Venlo this procedure was deviated from because as the time there were still insufficient families receiving support.
In the context of this programme evaluation we have attempted to interview all black and minority ethnic families that received support in 1997. For an important question to be answered in the extended experimental phase was: what significance Home-Start might have for black and minority ethnic families. One or two families refused to co-operate. Eventually 13 mothers of black and minority ethnic origin were interviewed. This amounts to nearly 50% of all black and minority ethnic mothers that were supported in the experimental phase, to wit 30 mothers. 22% of the volunteers were interviewed. In contrast to the families there was no a-select random check in the volunteers' case. During group meetings co-ordinators asked if volunteers were willing to participate in a group interview. The enthusiasm for this was consider-able. Usually practical circumstances determined which volunteers participated in the end.
In addition, individual interviews were conducted with volunteers. For this all volunteers supporting a black and minority ethnic family were approached. Thus we hoped to gain a better insight into the support of black and minority ethnic families.
Finally, all co-ordinators were interviewed as were the support officials who actually supported projects.

Notes were made of the interviews with the co-ordinators, the support officials and the group interviews. The face to face interviews with volunteers and parents were recorded on tape and typed out literally. These interviews lasted on average 1 to 1.5 hours; the group interviews approximately 2 hours. The interviews were conducted in Autumn 1997 and Spring 1998.

Data from consultations, working visits, notes and other documents
Data on Home-Start's functioning in the Netherlands and on the separate projects in particular can also be derived from all sorts of existing documents such as the notes (minutes) of meetings and theme meetings with fund providers and authorities. In addition, working visits provide a rich source of information as does attending meetings on various levels. We have also made use of these forms of data gathering.

The gathering of data
As in the study carried out by the University of Amsterdam, the gathering of data was at times a difficult process. There are several reasons for this. Sometimes the co-ordinators work under considerable pressure as a result of which other activities take priority and registration receives low priority. In addition the care and welfare sector does not have much of a tradition with regard to systematic registration of data. Finally researchers are not always careful to recycle data or they omit to make data available in a way that allows the projects to benefit from them, which at times causes aversion against research. Al these factors result in the creation of gaps in the data files. This does not apply to the core data, such as the number of families and of volunteers, the hours of co-ordinators and the number of families receiving support per project.

Frame of reference for the practice study

The programme evaluation can be regarded as a practice study: data were gathered that are to provide a picture of the Home-Start's projects' actual functioning in everyday practice. Earlier on it was stated that to this effect a large number of data were gathered: 85 persons involved were interviewed, 365 questionnaires filled in, meetings were attended and working visits paid. These data can only acquire significance if and when they are compared to a frame of reference. The frame of reference for this programme evaluation consists of:

- the guidelines, points of departure, quality requirements and objectives of Home-Start (Home-Start Manual 1988);
- the results of the process description of the first three pilot projects (Van Dijke and Terpstra 1996);
- the effects study of the University of Amsterdam (Hermanns et. al. 1997);
- the study into the black and minority ethnic families that avail themselves of Home-Start (De Haas 1998).

The process description and the effects study refer to the first three pilot projects in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray (period of 1993-1996). The study into the black and minority ethnic families was carried out in 1997/1998.

The programme evaluation refers to the period of 1993-1998, therefore the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase. Although in the experimental phase a process evaluation and an effects study had already been carried out, we emphatically opted for making the programme evaluation refer to the entire experimental phase. On the one hand this provides the opportunity to carry out an integrated study into the developments of the long-running projects and to see if for example there are any differences in the initial phase between the pioneers and the projects that started more recently. On the other hand it provides the opportunity to make an integrated use of the findings of earlier studies.
Thus it is easier to put developments in a time perspective. Furthermore we possess data from the experimental phase that are not available from the extended experimental phase. This refers to, in particular, the results of the effects study that the University of Amsterdam carried out in the experimental phase. We feel that it would be a missed chance not to involve data already available in this study, and leave them aside, supposing them to be familiar.

4 The families

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the families that received support in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase. Of all the families that received support in the period of 01-01-19954 until 01-01-1998 data have been processed. Although the programme is emphatically open to mothers as well as to fathers, no father appealed to Home-Start in this phase. Where the terms parent or family are used, it is therefore always the mother's perspective.

This chapter first presents a brief characterisation of the families. This includes background information such as cultural and socio-economical background and composition of the family. In addition aspects will be dealt with that influence the pedagogical climate in families: prevention of negative and drastic events; parenting stress and parenting competence; and the incorporation in a supportive network. After the characterisation of the Home-Start families we will discuss in what way families come into contact with Home-Start and the families' need for support: what do mothers ask of Home-Start? Specific attention will be paid to families that appeal not just to Home-Start but also to other forms of social work. The chapter ends with the question whether the mothers are satisfied with the support Home-Start provides.

Brief characterisation of the families

Every Home-Start project registers data of the families. Usually co-ordinators and volunteers are somewhat reserved about this as the asking of questions (and registration of answers) of personal data is felt to be contradictory to the points of departure such as confidentiality and equality. At the same time the importance of registration is being recognised. This resulted in a registration system in which the families are not subjected to a 'first degree' but in which sufficient data are made available to form an overall picture of the supported families. For example, no income questions were asked and the educational level of the mother is considered to be an indication of the socio-economical status of a family.

In addition, questions about the cultural or ethnic background were asked and mother's job market position, the composition of the family and the children's ages.

Cultural or ethnic background

Of the 190 mothers most were born and bred in the Netherlands (80%). A small percentage (4%) is from other European countries; Poland, Bosnia, Belgium, Germany, France and England. In the other 16% there is considerable diversity of cultural background: amongst others Antilles, Chinese, Ethiopian, Moroccan, Somali, Sri Lanka, Surinam, Turkish, Zaire and Vietnamese. In the latter group of mothers the emphasis is on Turkish, Surinam and to a lesser extent Moroccan women.

In the experimental phase only 7% of the mothers was from a black or minority ethnic background (Hermanns et. al. 1997).

This implies that in the extended experimental phase these groups have 'caught up'

Age

The average age of the mothers is 31: the youngest is 19 and the oldest 47 years old. Per project the average age differs considerably. In Heerlen and Rotterdam the mothers are youngest and the average age are respectively 24 and 27 years of age. In Leiden, Roermond and Venray the average age is highest, respectively 36, 35 and 35 years of age.

Level of education of the mothers

It is remarkable that the programme reaches many mothers with a low socio-economical status. For most women (62%) have a relatively low level of education: primary education, vocational training 12-16 or MAVO. In addition 28% has vocational training 16-18, HAVO or secondary education and 10% has had vocational training 18+or a university education.

Of black and minority ethnic mothers levels of education are not always known. Where it is known it usually is somewhat below that of native Dutch mothers (low: 70%; intermediate: 26%, high: 4%)

Table 5

Highest level of education of the mothers (perc.)

	low			**intermediate**		**high**	
Education	Prim.	Voc.12-16	Mavo	Voc.16-18	Secondary	Voc.18+	Univ.
Progr Eval.	16%	34%	12%	20%	8%	7%	3%
UVA study	10%	42%	19%	10%	10%	8%	-

Compared to the first two years in the entire experimental phase the percentage of mothers with a low educational level decreased from 71% to 62%. The percentage of mothers with intermediate or higher level training increased.

It appears from further analysis of data that this shift does not present itself everywhere. Projects set up in the context of socio-cultural work and Home care reached the same target group in the extended experimental phase as in the experimental phase. The projects set up from the volunteers sector reached mothers that had by far less low levels of training. In these projects the emphasis is on mothers with an intermediate level of training.

Table 6

Level of education of mothers according to type of work (perc.)

Level of education	low	intermediate	high
Soc.cult. work (n=87)	72%	21%	6%
Home care (n=4f2)	74%	19%	7%
Vol. Org. (n=61)	36%	45%	18%
Progr. Eval.	62%	28%	9%
UVA study	71%	20%	8%

On comparing the figures from the above table the conclusion must be that the group of mothers with a low level of education is overrepresented in the projects of Home care and socio-cultural work whereas the projects from the volunteers sector reflect the national averages of women rather more. Hermanns et. al (1997) state that in the Netherlands parents of young children have had a relatively high level of education. They refer to a large representative random check of over 1200 Dutch mothers in which 28% of the mothers have had at most primary school or vocational training12-16 (Vergeer and Hermanns 1996). Almost 1 out of every 3 mothers in this random check had HAVO or even higher levels of education. Peeters and Woldringh (1993) found almost exactly the same data in a representative group of mothers.

Working mother or housewife?
In the Netherlands at present more than 50% of the mothers with children under the age of 6 (55%) have jobs (SCP 1997:53). Of the Home-Start mothers not more than 12% combines raising children with paid work. Most (83%) do not have paid jobs and are not looking for them. They think of themselves as housewives. Very few mothers are looking for paid jobs (5%).

Children
The 190 mothers have 409 children all in all. Most families have 1, 2 or 3 children (85%) but there are some families with four, five, six or seven children. The average number of children per family is above the national average of 1.6% with 2.2% (Beker and Maas 1997). Maastricht is remarkable for its number of larger families.

Table 7
Number of children per family (perc.)

Child	one	two	three	four	five	six	seven	total
Perc	25	34	26	8	5	1	1	100%

Composition of the family
Most households in the Netherlands can be characterised as two-parent families; 10% as single parent families (Niphuis-Nell 1997).
Compared to the national averages Home-Start has a considerable overrepresentation of single-parent families: 42% single-parent families and 58% two-parent families. Black and minority ethnic families do not deviate from this picture with 38% single-parent families and 62% two-parent families. Compared to the first two years there is a considerable increase of the percentage of single-parent families: from 30% to 42%.

As for the composition of the families, the great differences per projects are striking. Compared to the national figures there is for example in Venray but a small overrepresentation of single-parent families (17%) whereas for example in Rotterdam there is a large overrepresentation of single-parent families (70%).

Table 8
Percentage of single-parent families per project (perc.)

Project	Amf	Dor	Emm	Hrl	Ldn	Mst	Rrm	Rot	Ven
Perc.	32%	5-%	45%	45%	50%	60%	56%	70%	17%

Most single-parent families were the result of divorce (64%), 33% concerned an unmarried mother giving birth and in some cases the cause was widowhood (3%). The projects in Heerlen, Maastricht and Roermond number relatively many unmarried mothers among the single-parent families. No data are available about Amersfoort on this subject.

Negative and drastic events in families
Hermanns et. al. State that Home-Start wants to give support to 'families (with young children) that are faced with an accumulation of problems they cannot solve. Parenting problems usually are a part of these problems.' (1997: 36) From this perspective the families from the experimental phase were presented with the 'Questionnaire of Experienced Events'. This was intended to study the number of events that the families had experienced in the past 12 months, that were felt to be negative and drastic. The families in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray experienced many more negative and drastic events than did the families from a random national check, i.e. five times as many (Vergeer and Hermanns, 1996). Here we are talking about considerable decrease of income, contacts with the police or the law and violence within and without the family. 'The Home-Start families in this respect are comparable to families that end up in semi-residential care. The Home-Start group experiences a little less misery than does the Families First group' (1997:36). These are families with very serious and acute parenting problems, of which it is presumed that sooner or later the result would be placement outside the home by court order; Families First is intended to prevent this.
Hermanns concludes that the families in the experimental phase are characterised by an accumulation of problems, often are in a weak social position and have social networks that function in a limited manner.

In the extended experimental phase Home-Start families were not presented with this questionnaire. Therefore it cannot be said with certainty what effects the changes in the composition of the target group have on such results. However, it is supposed that an accumulation of negative and drastic events is related to, amongst other things, a low socio-economic status of the families and with living in areas of deprivation.

Parenting stress and parenting ability (competence)
It was also checked in the experimental phase to what extent there was daily parenting stress in the families that appeal to Home-Start and to the mothers' perception of parenting as a whole. The results of the study demonstrated that the Home-Start group is frequently faced with daily parenting stress. This refers to tension that occurs when children demand attention, which the mother is unable to give at that particular time. Questions about the percention of parenting clearly showed the feeling of being 'overburdened'. The negative aspects of parenting count heavily: parenting is perceived to be a difficult and heavy task.
These questionnaires, too, were not presented to families in the extended experimental phase.

Incorporation of families in a social network

A final aspect that was dealt with in the study by Hermanns et. al. but that was not researched in the extended experimental phase is, to what extent families possess a social network that is able to give them support or information on parenting. Compared to the national random check of the study Parenting in the Netherlands it is shown that Home-Start mothers 'avail themselves much less of other people to ask for support or information. Only for practical problems in the family (child minding, help clearing up) do they turn to others to a similar extent as the average mother. It seems as if the social network of Home-Start mothers 'is less closely woven' than that of the average mother. These findings can in part be explained by the somewhat weaker socio-economic position of the Home-Start mothers.' (Hermanns et. al. 1997:40). If the finding of the effect study –that the supporting network is weaker than average- is linked to the fact that 88% of the mothers do not have paid jobs outside the home, it is not improbable that many mothers are faced with social isolation to a greater or lesser extent.

How do families come into contact with Home-Start

There are few families that find their way to Home-Start by themselves. For example as a result of a newspaper article, a radio programme, an information meeting, a leaflet or by word of mouth. The majority of the families are referred to Home-Start by professionals. It is shown in registration data from the projects that there is a considerable diversity of referring agencies. In order to gain some insight into the referring pattern the referring agencies were subdivided into eight categories. These categories were subdivided in their turn into four clusters.

Cluster 1	basic provision, services of a preventative nature and services that provide help, care and assistance in relatively minor problems (local level);
Cluster 2	services for non-assessed forms of assistance (local or sub-regional level);
Cluster 3	services in the curative and judicial sphere (regional level);
Cluster 4	the informal circuit.

Cluster 1: basic provision and prevention

Category a	primary education, kindergarten, day-care for children
Category b	consultation bureau, general practitioner
Category c	well-baby clinic, community work, community development work, service centres, social work for black and minority ethnic people, refugee work, primary education
Category d	home care, home help, district nursing

Cluster 2: non-assessed assistance

Category e	social work (AMW), physiotherapy, social services for the learning disabled (SPD) school counselling services (SBD), education counselling services (OBD)

Cluster 3: curative and judicial

Category f	RIAGG, institutions for child care, FIOM, intensive home care and intensive home support, Foundation Gamblers Anonymous
Category g	Council for the Protection of Children

Cluster 4: informal
Category h: neighbours, friends.

What is striking, first of all, is the great diversity in referring agencies. The emphasis here is on services and provisions that are mainly organised at the local level, such as GPs, school, kindergarten, social work, baby well clinics and home care.
Two-thirds of the families comes into contact with Home-Start by intervention of these low-threshold services and provisions. One-third through assistance agencies; this refers to both assessed and non-assessed assistance and sometimes by intervention of child protection agencies.

Table 9
Type of referring agency to families (perc.)

Referring Agencies	basic provision and prevention	non-assessed assistance	curative and judicial	informal
Families	64%	20%	13%	3%

Per project there are differences in referring agencies. The table below provides a picture per project of the type of referring agency that brings the Home-Start provisions to the attention of families. The projects in Dordrecht and Leiden were not included in the table as too few families were supported at the time to enable us to distinguish a pattern of referral.

Table 10
Type of referring agency per project (perc.)

Category	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Heerlen	38	31	12	3	6	6	-	3
Maastricht	17	-	6	39	17	22	-	-
Roermond	13	-	44	6	19	19	-	-
Venray	10	6	-	55	6	23	-	-
Amersfoort	7	21	14	14	29	4	-	3
Emmen	-	-	11	44	22	11	11	-
Rotterdam	-	13	-	75	13	-	-	-

Basic provision and prevention (a, b, c, d); non-assessed assistance (e); curative and judicial (f, g); informal (h).

The number of families that end up with Home-Start through the basic and preventive service provision (category a, b, c and d) on the one hand, and through social work (assistance) agencies (category e, f and g) on the other, differs per project. Referrals from social work are few in Heerlen (12%) and numerous in Roermond, Maastricht and Emmen (respectively 38%, 39% and 44%). These

projects, compared to the other projects, have most referrals from the more severe forms of social work.

There are also differences per project with regard to referrals from the basic and preventive service provision (the low-threshold generally accessible provisions). In Maastricht, Venray, Rotterdam and Emmen most families end up with Home-Start from this cluster of referring agencies through home care, home help and district nursing. Home-Start Heerlen is remarkable because families are referred mostly through the basic service provisions on a neighbourhood level (81%): kindergarten, the well baby clinic and socio-cultural work. In Roermond and Amersfoort as well there are relatively many families that were referred by basic service provisions, respectively 57% and 42% of the families.

Need for support

Many mothers do not identify specific problems. Seventy five percent of all mothers feels the need to open up to someone occasionally or to talk to someone. In addition, a large number of mothers requests practical support (64%) and 42% needs support in bringing up children. Finally over one third (36%) of the mothers contacts Home-Start because they feel isolated. In general the mothers demand is not restricted to one category. On average they ask support on two out of the four categories in which the demands have been incorporated;

-support in breaking through social isolation;
-someone to talk to, someone who will listen;
-support in practical problems;
-support in bringing up children or in dealing with a child that is perceived to be diificult.

Table 11
Need for support per category

Category	social Isolation	talking to someone	practical support	parenting support
Progr. Evaluation	36%	75%	64%	42%
UVA study	25%	73%	56%	17%

This table demonstrates that the division of the demands over the four categories shows a different picture over the entire experimental phase than in the period 1994-1996. It is striking, however, that the number of mothers that needs to open up to someone remains consistent: three out of every four mothers that appeal to Home-Start. And then there is a remarkable increase of mothers in need of support in bringing up children and dealing with children and there is a slight increase in the need for practical support.

Research data show that many mothers do not always come to Home-start with a clearly stated problem. Often it is a 'feeling of being uncomfortable' of 'feeling troubled', 'having too few moments to oneself', 'too few contacts with other people', 'the need for someone who will mind the children every now and again', the 'need for company', or for example 'the need to go shopping with someone or

having a cup of coffee downtown'. Mothers clearly present a different demand to Home-Start than to professional provisions, that emphasise emotional support of mothers themselves. We may safely conclude that Home-Start projects fulfil their promises: they provide practical support or someone who will listen and they do not pretend to be professional social workers. By way of illustration a few mothers about their reasons to contact Home-Start.

'At first my youngest slept very little. He woke up three or four times during the night. At first he was crying all the time (...) If the volunteer was in, I could find some time for myself. To sleep or get some rest or have a bath.' (Black and minority ethnic mother, 34 years of age, two children).

'The youngest in particular is a very active child and takes up too much attention. Sometimes I could almost strangle him. And then you suddenly find things are not going so well at all. He would try me, see how far he could go (...) I needed someone to guide me. Children do not come with an instruction code.' (native Dutch mother, 30 years old, two children).

'Well, mainly things I could not do with the children myself due to my physical condition. That the children can go outside, too. I could not do much in those days, sometimes I couldn't even go out. I can't run about, so she will play football with them. She is doing the things I cannot do myself at the moment. Sometimes I will sit with them, but sometimes I will just lie down on the sofa. Then I leave them alone. That is great, some peace and quiet.' (native Dutch mother, 39 years old, two children).

Need for support in black and minority ethnic families

The issue what Home-Start has to offer to black and minority ethnic families was one of the questions that had to be studied in the extended experimental phase. In the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase 20% of the families had been born and bred outside The Netherlands. By and large native Dutch and black and minority ethnic mothers equally often express the need for support in breaking through social isolation, the need to unburden to someone, the need for parenting support. With regard to practical support there are major differences. Whereas about 50% of native Dutch mothers requires practical support, nearly all black and minority ethnic mothers require practical support. The focus is on support in functioning in Dutch society. This is concerned with gaining an insight into this society and finding one's way around bureaucratic paperwork. Often black and minority ethnic women feel that a native Dutch volunteer is better able to help them with this than a black and minority ethnic one.

De Haas (1998) concludes that black and minority ethnic mothers focus on aspects of the volunteers that are related to their being Dutch and their own experience of life. However, this does not detract from the support, because the black and minority ethnic mothers request support specifically from this perspective. De Haas states that black and minority ethnic mothers appeal to Home-Start, among other things, because they feel the need for support from an integration perspective. They expect that native Dutch volunteers will be better able to help them in this respect than black and minority ethnic ones (De Haas 1998). A few black and minority ethnic mothers and a co-ordinator

'I know people that do not have dealings with Dutch people very often. But I think it is important, because I live here and I also want to learn about Dutch culture.' (black and minority ethnic mother)

'They would help me, for example, with the students' grants debts and the volunteer would say: "You should go to this or that institution." Yes, I feel I can cope with things much better now. If something is the matter with the council or the child protection agencies I will just telephone.' (black and minority ethnic woman).

'I have an example of a Surinam Hindu woman married to a Dutch man. She has a two-and-a-half year old boy in kindergarten in the neighbourhood centre. She would like a friend. A Dutch white female friend. She wants to compare and learn things about the Dutch culture. There was a time when she would be afraid to go out. She felt she was doing everything wrong. I lower my eyes, for that is what you do in the street or people will think you are a whore. But in Holland everything is different. She wanted a friend to help her learn these things. She was matched with a friend that could teach her all these things about the Dutch way.' (coördinator).

From interviews with the co-ordinators the picture emerges that among black and minority ethnic families more attention should be paid to the question what Home-Start support actually involves. Some co-ordinators suppose that black and minority ethnic families are not or hardly at all familiar with volunteering and with this form of support, which makes it more difficult for them to imagine what they can and cannot expect from a volunteer. That is why black and minority ethnic families will ask for practical or concrete forms of assistance more often, for example support in housekeeping, in helping children with their homework or in filling in forms.

'With black and minority ethnic families we will visit at least two times by way of introduction. We take more time for getting acquainted. Especially with black and minority ethnic families it is very important to state clearly that volunteers will not do housework chores. Another matter is the polite standards: yes is not always yes. But the referring agencies also play a part in this. Sometimes referring agencies have a hidden agenda.
Black and minority ethnic families often express a very clear demand to Home-Start. For example to help children with their homework. This type of support is often difficult to achieve for mothers. In addition, these mothers often work in the evenings, so they must have everything ready before the husband comes in. They just don't have the time for extra things.' (Coördinator).

Use of professional care and service provision

In practice many families do not just appeal to Home-Start, but also to other provisions. On the one hand this refers to the basic provision and provisions within the community, such as the GP, the well-baby clinic, kindergarten or the community centre.
It is remarkable that a considerable number of families is also involved with one or more forms of assistance and care. This refers to, among others things, social work, social services for the learning disabled, school or education counselling services, RIAGG, youth care institutions, FIOM, intensive home care, forms of intensive home support and the Council for the Protection of Children. It has to be noticed here that but a few families have dealings with the Council for the Protection of Children.
It was difficult to establish a clear picture of the number of families making use of these provisions and of the number of provisions per family. On the basis of the available data an overall picture can be given of the number of families that, in addition to Home-Start, is making use of professional social work, care. Roughly speaking this varies from 50% of the families in Amersfoort to 20% of the families in Venray.

Table 12
Families in involved with social work or judicial provisions (indication) (perc.)

Project	Amf	Dordr	Emm	Hrln	Ldn	Mstr	Rrm	Rott	Venr
Perc.	50%	-	25%	40%	-	40%	20%	30%	20%

These data point to an overrepresentation of families making use of professional assistance at Home-Start. The percentages, by the way, would be considerably higher if the more preventive forms of social work and service provision, district nursing, home help and the basic provisions had been included in the table.

From the available data it was difficult to establish in how many families there was involvement of several assistance agencies. This is frequently reported on in the interviews. A volunteer:

'I support a family with three children. The father of the family was in a recuperation institution and the mother had had breast cancer. The parents have many problems. The youngest child hardly speaks at all, the middle child is very quiet and the oldest child is clearly the scapegoat: everything is his fault. Believe it or not, eleven agencies are involved with this family. From social work, youth care and speech therapy to Home-Start. The agencies all work at cross purposes: each agency had its own 'project' within this family.' (volunteer)

In the characterisation of the families it was established that many families are dealing with an accumulation of problems but also that many families have social networks that function inadequatlely. As it appears, experiencing parenting problems is usually accompanied by less support from the social surroundings. (Hermanns 1996). Whereas social support acts as a buffer to the influence that tension and stress have on other areas of life. Or, in other words, the families most in need of social support, receive the least. Possibly the need of forms of non-professional support is greater in families that make use of professional assistance than in families that do not make use of it. For, the fewer problems, the better families are able to organise their social support. As a result of which they are better protected against parenting problems. This is an argument to investigate more intensively the way in which social work and service provision of professional organisations and the support Home-Start provides, could reinforce one another. Hermanns (1997) already stated that the effects of Home-Start are complementary to the effects of professional help. Point of departure should therefore be that the strong points of social work on the one hand, and the strong points of Home-Start on the other, should benefit the families and reinforce one another. This also advocates that Home-Start –more than has been the case so far- should make an effort to 'reinforce the social networks surrounding families' and 'support parents to (learn to) make an effective use of them.'

From the perspective of professional social work and service provision the Home-Start services can be positioned in various ways.

1 Families are dealing with stressful circumstances of a temporary nature, to which Home-Start's support provides an adequate answer.

2 Families do not want to enlist professional help. For example because they feel shame towards relatives or neighbours or because they do not trust it (any more) and are afraid of trouble if professionals start to 'meddle' with their families.

3 Parents are in a bad way (in a state of discomfort). By Home-Start's support they get a grip on their feeling of discomfort and on what really is the matter. This may result in a mother deciding to apply to professional help.

4 Families appeal to Home-Start, while already availing themselves of professional forms of social work. For example, there was a mother who always made an appointment with her volunteer after she had seen the RIAGG. 'To blow off steam.' Another example is a mother who is receiving video home training to get a better hold of her relationship with her children. She is asking Home-Start to support her because she finds it difficult to apply new insight in everyday reality. The demand on Home-Start need not be related directly to the demand on professional social work. A mother can avail herself of youth care services for problems with one of her children and yet appeal to Home-Start because she has no contacts in the neighbourhood and does not get out at all.

5 Sometimes a family will ask for Home-Start's support if it is in the final stage of a care process. The care has stopped or decreased and people still feel unsure about whether they are ready to cope on their own.

Earlier on it was stated that the effects of Home-Start are additional to the effects of professional help. Hermanns et. al. (1997) also state that the effects of Home-Start are additional to effects of the regenerating abilities of the families: therefore volunteers really provide a hand up to families in stressful circumstances.

Are mothers satisfied about Home-Start

An important question is whether mothers are satisfied with this support. This question was presented in personal interviews (n=33) to families in the extended experimental phase. These interviews are by way of being an a-select random check and families of all projects are being represented. The degree of satisfaction is extremely high; 10% is neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; nobody is dissatisfied. Only one mother is dissatisfied. Later on in this chapter she is being quoted. In the experimental phase all mothers were interviewed, after the support had ended. In this period satisfaction with the support was even greater than in the extended experimental phase: all mothers (54%) indicated that that they were extremely satisfied. One mother deviated from this but even she was reasonably satisfied with Home-Start. Although it is not entirely possible to exclude the risk of socially desirable answers we have attempted to reduce this risk as much as possible. The interviews were conducted by a professional not connected with Home-Start and the data were processed on a basis of anonymity. Therefore we may depart from the notion that mothers are indeed reasonably satisfied with the support they receive from Home-Start. And yet there is a certain extent of distortion as we are dealing here with mothers who have received support. With regard to the mothers that dropped out in the early stages, it is not known what caused their dissatisfaction. There is the impression that mothers that are not satisfied indicate in the very earliest stages, after a few contacts at most, that they have no further need for the volunteers' visits. This is only to be expected. For the parents themselves are in charge of the support.

Here we present the opinions of some mothers, who indicate why they are satisfied with Home-Start.

'Well the word psychiatrist came up and I immediately was opposed to it, I am not crazy. This is less formal. You do not feel everything you say is being written down and that you are stamped as such and such a person. It all takes place in your home, someone to visit you once a week is easier to talk to than someone you have to go and see every week. And then they put you on file and here they don't. If you just want to nag you can do it. That works for me. I don't think I would tell a psychiatrist half as much as I'm doing now. You gradually come to look upon her as a friend, you don't do that with a psychiatrist. And if you see a psychiatrist the neighbours will brand you, that is for sure.' (native Dutch mother)

'By talking and giving examples. That you can learn from your mistakes. Every mother feels at times: "I made a mistake then." A little recognition, that she has had the same experience. She gave me hope and comfort.' (black and minority ethnic mother)

'At first I was suspicious when she wanted to dig into things and she noticed and then she would keep to the background. Then we would do the dishes together and then we would talk anyway. That way openness developed, and because of that I was able to make choices because I felt supported. Also with regard to breaking up my relationship with my ex-husband and starting an education. Things that did not take all that much to take the first step, but I lacked just that little bit for a very long time. So this support is just what you need.' (native Dutch mother)

'The approach appeals to me. I was given the time to begin myself. I had noticed she wasn't doing it for the money, that impressed me favourably. They do care about the problems. Because it is very difficult to gain the trust of people, with problems, I mean. They know how to do that. They really work on an individual basis and with volunteers and I really admire that. So personal. Through Home-Start I was able to regain a sense of trust in people. (black and minority ethnic mother.)

'Society has changed. You cannot turn to your neighbours anymore, as you used to. Many people have jobs nowadays and just don't have the time.' (black and minority ethnic mother.)

'If I apologised when things became too much, if I burst into tears, she would say: "Don't apologise for that." You are allowed this part of yourself. At first that was difficult for me. That is wasn't failure but an essential part a human being. Sometimes the best part, because it is about feelings. Feelings are the basis. Brains are alright and you can earn a living with them, but that is not what it is all about. And if you don't have it yourself, there is no way you can give it to your children. And then they drop behind in their social-emotional development.' (native Dutch mother)

'When I had just married I thought I knew it all, but when we got a divorce, I was on my own. And that was not easy. You have to fend for yourself in a wide world full of dangers with three little ones and you have to be able to speak up for yourself. I could not. This frustrated me and then you drag yourself down. The volunteer played a good part in this. Now I will just get up and do things. The main thing she taught me is that if you want to get something off your chest you must just do it now and not put it off. That was very helpful for me. Yes, very helpful. (...) I have grown emotionally. Now she will just drop by for a social call or for me to vent my emotions. Now I can do without her for three weeks on end, and at first a week was too much really.' (native Dutch mother)

The fact that the families are satisfied with the support does not mean that nothing ever goes wrong. We will now let a mother talk about that. In the next chapter we will deal more extensively with the question where bottlenecks may occur in the support of families.

'Well the first woman was supposed to have a lot of experience, but what it all amounted to was that she did not get up from the couch. That I was serving her coffee. We talked a little but I did not feel inclined to open up to her. We went shopping once, but I did not expect much from it. I believe she stopped of her own accord or temporarily, I don't really know. Then somebody else came. I could relate to her, but she did not have enough time. She wanted to, but had too much to do for herself. I could not really rely on when she would show up. Always some other time of the day or day of the week. I did take to her however, and so did the kids, I could talk to her.' (native Dutch mother.)

5 The volunteers

Introduction

The data in this chapter refer to the 140 volunteers that were involved in Home-Start in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase. Just like the parents that appeal to Home-Start the volunteers are nearly all women. Very few men attended the volunteers training course. Eventually only once a man supported a family. For the time being it is a method for and by mothers. In this chapter we will provide a short characterisation of the volunteers, as we did with the mothers. We have already stated that the way in which the support is being implemented is not standardised. There is no previously set programme or phased procedure that a family has to follow. That is why this chapter lets the volunteers have their say. Thus the reader can form a picture of the processes that took place between a volunteer and a mother. The chapter is structured by means of questions such as: What does Home-Start mean for volunteers? What is it the volunteers actually do in the families? Is the method suited to them or is it difficult for them to put it into practice?
The chapter ends with two themes. The first is the theme what is and what is no longer a Home-Start family. The second theme refers to the functioning of volunteers in black and minority ethnic families.

Brief characterisation of the volunteers

Cultural background, age and composition of the family

For the larger part the 140 volunteers are all native Dutch women with children. Only one project managed to recruit a fair-sized group of black and minority ethnic volunteers. For various reasons, this group left immediately after finishing the preparatory course. Eventually only one volunteer of this group of black and minority ethnic women actually supported a family. On average the volunteers are sixteen years older than the mothers. Whereas the average age of the mothers is 31, the average age of the volunteers is 45. Per project this differs from 40 years of age in Heerlen to an average of 50 in Leiden, Emmen and Roermond. It is striking that the mothers and the volunteers display similarities as to family composition. Whereas 42% of the mothers' households is a single parent family, 37% of the volunteers' households is a single parent family and 63% two parent family.

Level of education

The volunteers have a higher level of education than the mothers and are proportionally divided over the lower, intermediary and higher level of education: respectively 31%, 35% and 34%. It is striking that there is a high percentage of volunteers that has attended vocational training for 16-18 or 18+ year olds (62%).

Table 13
Highest level of education of the volunteers (perc.)

Education	low			intermediate		high	
	BO	LBO	MAVO	MBO	HAVO/VWO	HBO	UNIV.
Progr. Eval	4	16	11	34	1	25	9
UVA study	11	20	20	22	4	22	-

BO=primary school; LBO=vocational training 12-16; MAVO=lower general secondary education; MBO=vocational training 16-18; HAVO/VWO higher general secondary education; HBO=vocational training 18+; WO=academic

In comparing the figures from the experimental phase it can be observed that there is a 'loss of volunteers on the lower range': the number of volunteers with a relatively low level of education decreased from 51% to 31%. At the same time, in the past two years volunteers with university education entered Home-Start's range of volunteers. As with the mothers, here too we checked whether this shift is related to the area of work or sector that manages a project. Table 14 is a rendition of the percentages of volunteers with a relatively low level of education, with an intermediate level of education and with a relatively high level of education. In table 15 these figures will be itemised.

Table 14
Average level of education of volunteers per area of work (1993-1998) (perc.)

Level of education	low	intermediate	high
Soc. Cult. Work	54	25	22
Home care	28	33	38
Volunteers sector	12	46	43
UVA study	51	26	22

Table 15
Highest level of education of volunteers per area of work (1993-1998) (perc.)

Level of education	low		intermediate			high	
	BO	LBO	MAVO	MBO	HAVO/VWO	HBO	WO
Soc cult. work	7	33	14	25	-	18	4
Home care	-	14	14	33	--	38	-
Volunteers sector	2	2	8	44	2	27	16
UVA study	11	20	20	22	4	22	-

On closer analysis of the figures it appears that the level of education of volunteers per sector differs. Socio-cultural work has the largest group of volunteers with a lower level of education. In home care, the level of education is higher. Although here the volunteers are reasonably fairly distributed over the three levels of education, the emphasis is on volunteers with vocational training 18+. In the projects set up from the volunteers sector the ranks of volunteers are for the larger part women with vocational training 16-18 or 18+ or a university education.
The shift with regard to the experimental phase is therefore mainly the result of the creation of diversity between the projects. Socio-cultural work still attracts the same volunteers as in the experimental phase. In particular the volunteers sector has a different type of volunteer with a higher level of education. This results in higher average figures. The same thing could be observed for the mothers.

Volunteers between registration and resignation

The tables below indicate the number of preparatory courses carried out per project, the number of volunteers that attended one of these courses and, finally, the number of volunteers that stopped (in due course). From the second table it can be concluded that the number of volunteers per course is approximately between 5 and 12 volunteers.
It is remarkable that the turnover of volunteers differs per project. Roermond and in particular Rotterdam had a large turnover. For Roermond this can be explained by the shift from Thuis-Start to Home-Start (start at home to Home-Start). The shift resulted in a number of volunteers dropping out (see also chapter 6). In chapter 6 we will deal with the turnover of volunteers in Rotterdam. Amersfoort and Venray stand out because they managed to recruit a relatively large number of volunteers and had a small turnover. Considering the efforts most projects have to make to recruit volunteers, it would be a good idea to pay attention to the question in what way volunteers can be 'bound' to a project, in future.

Table 16
Number of volunteers that started and stopped per project and year in which the project started (abs.)

	started	stopped	available	start project
Heerlen	22	7	15	1993
Maastricht	20	5	15	1993
Venray	25	4	21	1995
Amersfoort	31	3	29	1996
Rotterdam	16	14	2	1996
Emmen	6	-	6	1997
Roermond	36	10	26	1997
Dordrecht	12	3	9	1997
Leiden	5	1	4	1997
Venlo	5	0	5	1997
Groningen	6	0	6	1997

In Heerlen 3 volunteers stopped during or immediately after the course

Table 17
Number of preparatory courses and number of volunteers that attended these per project (abs.)

1 course	Groningen (6), Leiden (7), Venlo (5)
2 courses	Dordrecht (12), Emmen (9), Rotterdam (16), Venray (25)
3 courses	Amersfoort (31), Heerlen (22), Maastricht (20)
4 courses	Roermond (26)

A turnover in the ranks of the volunteers may also be an indication of personal growth of the volunteers. Sometimes volunteers experience enormous personal development and find they are ready for a new challenge after a while: another type of volunteering, education, paid jobs, sometimes employment as a Home-Start co-ordinator. In Heerlen, Maastricht and Roermond a volunteer managed to become a co-ordinator. From this perspective, more attention should be paid in future to 'career support' of volunteers. Or, in other words, to the question whether the projects can support volunteers in a more goal-oriented manner in this respect.

'Many volunteers have been active for a long time. Some of them found jobs. Sometimes it appears that people who already have a job feel it is important to do volunteering. Often you hear that volunteers think the course is too short. They are looking forward to the next session. Mutual contacts are very important. It is my impression that recognition is very important. Volunteers can use their experience and put it to advantage and at the same time they are experiencing personal growth.' (co-ordinator)

What does Home-Start mean to volunteers?
First of all a brief impression of the meaning that volunteering has for the volunteers themselves.

'Two years ago I started in my first family and now I find myself in the final phase. It was a very rewarding experience. I did some volunteering before. Home-Start is a very specific form of volunteering. I think it is very important that in particular families with young children are given every opportunity. It is very much worthwhile that you can give families a great deal just by 'being there' and 'paying attention'. In the beginning I sometimes stayed for a whole day. Also during different times of the day: in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evenings. The starting phase is very important and I really wanted to get to know my family.' (volunteer)

'In the demand-oriented approach and 'sitting on your hands' I find I meet my own boundaries. The message really always is that you have to accept people as they are. I find that this is not always a matter of course. I do some personal growing myself. You meet people. Your humanity becomes more precious. I grow emotionally.' (volunteer)

'The ideal family for a volunteer is a family that lets you feel that your are needed. The feeling that it matters. It is important that both the family and the volunteers experience personal growth. At the same time you as volunteer should not feel that you are completely replaceable. It is nice to have a special quality. Being a good listener, not everybody is that.' (volunteer).

'I come from an underprivileged neighbourhood myself. I know what it is to be poor. I was married twice. I have two kids from my first marriage. From my next marriage I had a third child. Later I attended the lower secondary general education for mothers (moedermavo). But it is not necessary to have been through it all in order to understand what it is all about.' (volunteer)

'I support an Ethiopian family, a mother and two children. There was a lot the lady did not understand at first. For instance she could not read the letters she received. I went to the head master of the special school to arrange for the school bus to transport them. That is rewarding. If you say you're from Home-Start you get things done. You achieve more, and yet your the same person. Through Home-Start you achieve more for families.
I have never experienced more gratitude. Image me being 72 and getting so many thank-yous. I do a lot with the children. The family does not have other relatives here. I think it is heaven sent for me to be allowed to support this family. For me it is a gift of God. Sometimes she will call me, and I'm in my night gown and then I put on my coat and my slippers and go over to her house in the evening. I was never thanked so much as during Home-Start. You are not supposed to play Santa Claus. But on birthdays and so on I do bring a present. It is the thought that counts. She spoils me too. She has so little money and if she then buys me a present it is so touching.' (volunteer)

The contacts with the families

In the experimental phase Hermanns et. al. studied how often volunteers had contacts with the families and in what way. They concluded the following. 'On average there are between 3 and 5 contacts per month between the volunteer and the mother. In the holidays (summer vacation and December) the contacts are less frequent. Considering the extent of the standard deviatons there is a rather large variability between volunteers in the frequency of the contacts per month. Approximately one third of the volunteers has more than 8 contacts in the busiest month. In the least busy month one third only has one and a half contact per month.
For the larger part of these cases these were personal contacts in the form of visits in the family home. Occasionally there was contact over the telephone. During visits there were mostly talks. There were also many contacts with the children (playing, joint activities).' (1997-1998)

Support in actual practice

How do the volunteers implement the contacts? What is it the volunteers actually do to support the families?

'I had a mother who was afraid to go out. After a while I deliberately brought my dog along and then I said." I need to take the dog for a walk, but we're having such a nice talk, why don't you come along?" The next time we would take the dog for a walk and then go to a shop. I plan these things.' (volunteer)

'Sitting on your hands to me is respecting people, letting them come up with their own solutions. You just listen. I don't think it is very hard. To her everything was just one blur, a chaos of emotions and stories. Just listening provided structure. Her own solutions were limited. I was important as a role model: she could see there were other options. I tried to show her you can act in an earlier stage. You need not let things get out of hand.' (volunteer)

It became clear earlier on that the programme does not make use of a pre-structured phased procedure that the mother has to follow. The contacts of the volunteers with the families are structured by a cluster of interrelated working principles, such as working in a demand-oriented manner, empowerment, the mother being in charge, focusing on families' strong points and on the use of people's own life experience and human qualities on a voluntary basis. The accompanying attitude that the method requires from the volunteers is far from simple. It is expressed in concepts such as spending time together, equality, recognition, building ties of friendship, trust and respect for other styles of living and parenting. What happens to the volunteer? Is this attitude natural to them or do they have to make an effort to put it into practice?

The method's core element is the demand-oriented approach. It is not the referring agency, the volunteer or the co-ordinator who decides what will happen and how, but the mother. Within Home-Start this attitude is defined as: 'sitting on your hands' and 'going with the rhythm of the family'. In practice it appears this is not always easy. Some volunteers and co-ordinators:

'Sitting on your hand to me means that you do not force your own solutions upon somebody else. There is a certain area of tension between sitting on your hands and being eager to tackle things' (volunteer)

'Sometimes sitting on your hands is difficult, your hands simply itch and you need to take a deep breath.' (volunteer)

'I'm not the type to sit on my hands. That's why I always say: "I'm sitting on one hand." Sometimes you do have to tackle things.' (volunteer)

'I used to be far too quick with my advice. I learned not to do that. It's better that way. People learn from doing things themselves. It's more fun, too, people will take the initiative then. If a mother has done the things herself, that's what is so good about it. Gradually you become superfluous. It is good and it isn't. But that is how it is supposed to be.' (volunteer)

'It is one of her set habits to make others responsible for her problem. Others will do the job. I turned this around. I said, I'm off now. Call me if you need me. And then if I ask her how things are going she will say: "It's alright." I know it is not but I take her seriously and that is why I said to her: "Call me if you need me". (volunteer)

'One volunteer could not simply respond to the family's care demand but wanted to solve everything herself. That did not work out, the support was terminated.' (co-ordinator)

'There are rules at Home-Start: for example sitting on your hands. In your private life you are inclined to say: "Oh let me do that.", for example when someone is afraid to make a phone call. Your are inclined to do things for them. Especially in my family. I am afraid that if she talks Dutch over the phone, she may not understand correctly. So then I'm inclined to do it for her. But you are not supposed to. When I did the course I imagined it would all be so grave. If you enter a family it all comes naturally. You image the worst. Instead you're just talking, as we are doing now. It's just not true that you are constantly discussing problems. Sometimes you just talk about the children. But the course did help. It explains a lot.' (volunteer)

'The support-ending phase goes well. If things are going well in a family we come back after 3 or 4 months and we discuss the state of affairs with the mother. Mothers often think we come to ask how the volunteer is doing her job. But we always explain it is the mother we have come to see. "We are here for you, not to hear how the volunteer is doing." we then say. They really appreciate that. Once every 3 to 6 months we visit the family. We always round off gradually. In my family, for instance, things went well for a while, but she wanted me around for company. And then I just said: I will be happy to drop by after the ending...when you find you can step back a little, that is the right time to start rounding off. If you say you want to make people stronger, you must not hang around forever. Mothers will sometimes feel uncomfortable about stopping the support. But when you say: "You're doing fine love, she will feel stronger." (volunteer)

'It is nice if you have established friendship and you are able to start the ending, because things are going well. Rounding off then is a matter of course. The mother has less and less time and less need. But you must always keep the door open. The weak point is, in my opinion, how long has the mother been in charge. For example, it may not be much fun for me any more, but I know I still mean a lot to the mother. That is difficult.' (volunteer)

The method's point of departure that the mother is in charge of the support has its limits. These limits are set by the volunteer's possibilities. The volunteers' limits seem to be interrelated for the larger part to the question if the volunteers themselves are able to grow in a family, and feel that their work is being appreciated and that 'it matters'.

'You always have your own responsibilities and ideas. That is a problem with a demand-oriented approach. The mother has asked me to help her along. But I won't for it will only just be a makeshift solution. So then I stop.' (volunteer)

'I get the feeling that she cannot cope, but that she won't face up to it. I would like to make her sit up and take notice. In my opinion she is just plain lazy. Last week the curtains were closed and she refused to open the door. She is always tired and ill. That could mean that she is unable to cope but it could also mean that it is just convenient for her. She wrote a note for the home help telling her what needed to be done. So she does notice things.' (volunteer)

In her research De Haas (1998) found that the support is not always based entirely on Home-Start's method principles: the demand-oriented approach in which the mother is in charge of what happens. It appears from interviews with volunteers that on the average volunteers use three forms of support:

1 The volunteers supports the mother according to the mother's wishes, within the restrictions of what is possible (this concerns a little less than 50% (45%) of the volunteers she interviewed);
2 The volunteer wants to support more or in other areas than the mother indicates.
3 The mother wants to receive more support or in other areas than the volunteer is willing or able to give.

Preparation, supervision and support

The above demonstrates that the method of demand-oriented approach requires attention and will continue to do so. It does not come naturally to every volunteer to work according this principle. The work in the families is not a 'trick you have to get the hang of', such as swimming or skating, skills

once acquired never forgotten. On every level the working principles require –from volunteers, co-ordinators and supporters- their being prepared to take a look at their own standards, values and notions and question them time and again. In addition they require that the volunteers learn to adopt a specific attitude. It may be clear that this is not something one 'learns in a preparatory course just like that' and that it requires a permanent process in which volunteers are willing to reflect on their actions. The method is described by means of guidelines, working principles, points of departure and quality requirements. These were translated into 'rules of behaviour'. In practice, however, it appears that if volunteers do not recognise the use of the rules of behaviour and do not, at regular intervals, check with colleagues whether it is possible for them to stick to them and what things they run into when they do stick to them, the method's working principles will soon become diluted. A method that is not based on a pre-structured phased procedure but makes use primarily of aspects of attitude, can only work if room is being created for continuous reflection on one's own behaviour: what did I do, how did I do it, why did I do it like this and would I do it differently another time? Or, in other words, how does one translate concepts such as 'sitting on your hands', 'being willing to enter into ties of friendship', 'respect for other styles of living and parenting' and 'focusing on a family's strong points', into action, related to concrete situations and practice.

That is why the group meetings and individual counselling of volunteers, in addition to the preparatory course, are essential to Home-Start's quality. Nearly all co-ordinators recognise this and emphasise the importance of a continual process of support and supervision.

'The preparatory course consists of 6 days from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The course is not sufficient. It should contain more information on people's own attitude. We can talk on and on about a different attitude, but how do you achieve it? Volunteers project far too much of their own lives on other people. You see that volunteers always have their own judgement. They feel the family should do as they do or as others do. We have to be alert to that.' (co-ordinator)

'The support of the family does not give any problems. I do feel that volunteers often require a lot of attention in order to function properly.' (co-ordinator)

'We have been paying more attention to individual counselling of volunteers. We saw that this was often necessary. For example when volunteers have been allocated black and minority ethnic families or when they have troubles of their own.' (co-ordinator)

'It is important that volunteers know each other and can find support in each other. The recognition is important: "Oh yes I came across such and such a thing". The feeling of not being alone.' (co-ordinator)

The importance of group meetings should not be underestimated. Some volunteers indicate in their interviews that they find the group meetings (even more) useful than individual counselling. In addition, they have a surplus value that volunteering is not an individual path, but is incorporated in a group. In several projects the group meeting developed into team consultations in which – in addition to support and improvement of methods- there is room for the progress of the project and more strategic policy

What is and what is not a Home-Start family?

The question what is and what is not a Home-Start family can in fact be answered only from the perspective of the boundaries and possibilities of the volunteers. Home-Start works best when not just the family but the volunteer too, is satisfied. However, in practice we find that, from the volunteers' point of view, some families just are not the right type. Volunteers suffer from burn-out, feel their efforts vanish into thin air and go nowhere.

Our professional lingo describes these families as 'multi-problem families': families that have a multitude of problems, often structural in nature. And yet this characterisation does not seem to be sufficient for a –to put it rather too strongly- contra-indication. For in the characterisation of the families we saw that in the experimental phase the average Home-Start family is faced with many stressors, has difficulties with parenting and experiences relatively drastic events. Nevertheless, in general the volunteers were satisfied with the support they were able to give. Although the problems in the families were more complex and difficult than was expected, at the same time the enthusiasm and confidence the families felt towards the volunteers was also greater than was expected. (Hermanns et. al. 1997:72) Apparently this primarily concerns families in which problems have become institutionalised: families in which care (social work) has become institutionalised, families in which their is intergenerational transferring, or families in which 'your hand in mine' support is needed until the children have left the home. In short, it is not simply the 'multi-problem' nature but mainly the fact that this is a structural part of the family culture, that cannot be changed for some reason or other. And yet volunteers often find it difficult to 'let go' of these families because of the children. One of the co-ordinators is right in observing that this puts a heavy claim and responsibility on the volunteers. In view of the quotations below this is an issue that is very much on the volunteers' minds.

What is (still) and what is (no more) a Home-Start family? A difficult question that played a part both in the experimental phase and in the extended experimental phase. Difficult, because in principle the programme opted for being open to all families and not excluding any. Then why is this question still on people's minds? Some co-ordinators and volunteers on the subject.

'If things are wrong structurally, it is difficult. You can give your best, but chances are that nothing will change. But, on the other hand, it all depends on the situation. If you have an experienced volunteer who has seen a lot and is not easily discouraged, it can be successful.' (co-ordinator)

'Often volunteers can do little in such cases. These families need another form of social work. We once had a 'multi-problem' family. The volunteer stuck to it for a very long time, for the children's sake if not for anything else. But she never really connected to the mother, who was in bed most of the time. In such cases you sometimes wonder if you're doing any good.' (co-ordinator)

'Multi-problem families lay too heavy a claim on the Home-Start volunteers. On average that is just too much. Or there are schemes meant to last until the children are out of puberty, or... And yet Home-Start makes a difference. But you must not expect too much: you're there, you support, that's it.' (co-ordinator)

'A number of families ought to be given support in more aspects (multi-problem situation). Home-Start's contribution is important, but only in minor parts of the problems.' (co-ordinator)

'Is there a limit? Families in which social work has become institutionalised. These families are unable to look upon volunteers as volunteers. They treat the volunteers as professional social workers.' (co-ordinator)

'With multi-problem families, often there's little volunteers can do. These families need other forms of support. You have to be able to say no and take care Home-Start is not being eroded.' (co-ordinator)

Support of black and minority ethnic families

It appears from De Haas' research (1998) that black and minority ethnic mothers appeal to Home-Start on the basis of a need for support in care and parenting from an integration perspective. They expect that native Dutch volunteers are better able to support them in this than are black and minority ethnic volunteers. Black and minority ethnic mothers that participate in Home-Start are open to a native Dutch volunteer and can therefore be supported by a native Dutch volunteer. Generally speaking, the support of black and minority ethnic families by native Dutch volunteers was satisfactory. In this study it is stated that volunteers are sufficiently open to the culture and unique history and context of black and minority families to support them well (p.48).

'Most volunteers are aware of their own standards and values and that these are not the only ones nor the best. (...) The volunteers use their knowledge and experience as native Dutch women, but, as far as appears from the study, only the mothers' request. Home-Start is a project that is open to the diversity of families. Most black and minority families that turn to Home-Start for support want to learn things about Dutch society and are therefore well satisfied with native Dutch volunteers.
Home-Start provides opportunities, if a number of starting points are being adhered to. Demand-oriented approach, connecting with the mother, is an important starting point of Home-Start which suits the group of black and minority ethnic people already focusing on Dutch society. In addition it is important that during the preparatory course the volunteers are being made aware of their own standards and values and that it is essential that the volunteers are warned that behaviour cannot be linked to culture just like that. In particular parenting differences are being described as cultural differences by the interviewed volunteers.' (De Haas, 1998: 49)

According to De Haas the interviewed volunteers detected that black and minority ethnic parents talk little about their children and what their child thinks, feels and wants. The volunteers label this parenting behaviour as culture-bound aspects. It does not become clear whether these are really culture-bound aspects or whether similar things happen in native Dutch families.
She concludes that black and minority ethnic mothers are open to native Dutch volunteers and are willing to learn a great deal from them. The black and minority mothers that are being supported by Home-Start are in the stage of autonomy or the stage of balance. During the stage of autonomy black and minority ethnic mothers learn aspects of Dutch culture in order to be able to cope in this culture. The stage of balance means that the black and minority ethnic mothers begins to feel at home in the Netherlands and is able to appreciate and put into perspective the cultural differences.
Initially volunteers focus on certain aspects of parenting in black and minority ethnic families. However, most volunteers do not mention this explicitly or only to the extent that it does not hamper the relation between the mother and the volunteer and therefore does not influence the support unfavourably.

Taking into account the fact that with the exception of two volunteers the support was satisfactory, we can state that volunteers are sufficiently open to the culture and unique history and context of black and minority families to be able to support these families adequately.
It appears that most volunteers are aware of their own standards and values and that these are not the only ones nor the best. Two volunteers mention this explicitly in their contacts with the mothers. The volunteers use their knowledge and experience as native Dutch women, but in so far as appears from the study only on the mothers' request. It does not transpire from the interviews with the black and minority ethnic mothers whether they regard the volunteers as professionals that hold a position superior to their own. (De Haas 1998)

An organisation model for volunteering

Finally in this chapter a few words on the organisation concept. An important part of volunteering in the Netherlands has been integrated in professional facilities. Home-Start provides a detailed concept for a voluntary organisation that invests in volunteers. Key elements are: volunteers are a team, with the co-ordinator (team building); structural attention for the development of volunteers and for the quality of volunteering (preparatory course, work supervision and group meetings); investing in social contacts between volunteers; expressing recognition and appreciation by means of social events; and career possibilities within the organisation. A strong element of the organisation concept is that the starting points and guidelines that structure the work in the families are at the same time the structuring principles for the organisation culture and structure. An organisation concept that can be a source of inspiration for professional services that avail themselves of volunteers.

6 The projects

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the projects. As with the families and the volunteers the projects will be characterised by means of quantitative and qualitative data. The chapter begins with a characterisation of each separate project. T we will discuss data such as the number of full-time hours each project has at its disposal, the number of families is being supported and the average duration of the support. Then for each project there will be a description of a number of striking developments. Sometimes a development is unique to a certain project, sometimes a developm will be described in relation to one project which will also apply to others. A common factor for the described developments is that they provide information relevant to the development of working methods or for Home-Start's further implementation and extension.

We would like to bring to the reader's notice that the presented data refer to the period up to 1-1-1998, but that after that moment life did go on. In Roermond, for example, the support of a large number of families was discontinued and then resumed at the end of 1997. The number of families on 01011998 can therefore not be representative for the number of families that usually receive support. At the end of 1997 new volunteers were recruited in Rotterdam, who attended training courses in early 1998. This new group of volunteers cannot be retrieved in Home-Start Rotterdam's presented data. Some projects were in the initial phase on 01011998, such as Dordrecht, Groningen, Leiden and Venlo. At that time other projects had to take a time-out, because they detected bottlenecks that required reflection and a new approach. There also were projects that developed steadily. In short, in 1998 developments continued as usual. Therefore it is possible that a stagnating project grew considerably or that a successful project ran into bottlenecks that required reflection or resulted in stagnation. We must therefore note that the projects cannot simply be compared.
What is special is that all co-ordinators were willing to share with us not only their successes and enthusiasm but also the bottlenecks and the frustrations. An experiment is allowed to fail, for bottlenecks can be just as instructive as successes. Here we would like to express our gratitude for the generosity with which co-ordinators and support officials have let us 'take a look behind the scenes'.

After a characterisation of the projects there will be a brief description of what is worthy of notice in the project descriptions.

Characterisation of the projects

In the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase projects were set up from various fields of work: socio-cultural work, home care and the volunteering sector. This implies amongst other things that the background and framework conditions for the projects vary. The specific characteristics of the local or regional situation, too, lend colour to the separate projects. That is why each project has its own 'local colour'. An important question is whether these are colour variations in the same colour range or that the 'local colour' of the separate projects can represent a different colour range.

First of all the three pioneers that set the ball rolling in the experimental phase will be described: Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray. Then we discuss the second recruitment of projects that were set up

in the extended experimental phase, from the volunteering sector: Amersfoort, Emmen and Rotterdam. Next there will be a description of the projects in the province of Zuid-Holland, that were the result of a collaboration between youth and child care institutions, the welfare sector and the volunteering sector. Finally we will deal with the projects that were set up without an encouragement subsidy form the national or provincial authorities. The projects in Groningen, Roermond and Venlo have managed to find a subsidy 'under their own steam' and then got going.

The pioneers: Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray

The projects in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray are the first three Home-Start projects in the Netherlands. They were set up and financed in the experimental phase with funds from the Ministry of VWS. The foundation Symbiose played a major part in the support of the projects in the experimental phase. The Netherlands Institute of Care and Welfare / NIZW, too, was closely involved with the developments of the first three projects. As of 01011996 these projects are no longer funded by the Ministry of VWS, instead the executing institutions themselves take care of the funding.

Home-Start Heerlen

Executing institution: local welfare foundation
Sector: socio-cultural work (community development work, community work)
Number of co-ordinators: 2
Full-time hours of co-ordinators: 8 hours and 35 hours (a total of 43 hours; until the summer of 1997 this was 8 hours per week)
Full-time hours of the support official: employed by Symbiose: supports this location during 2 to 3 hours a month.
Start of the project: 1993
Start of the support of the families: 1994
Number of supported families per 01011998: 33 (per 01011998, 15 running, 18 ended)
Total number of volunteers: 22 (per 01011998 available 15, stopped 7)
Average duration of the support: support that ended, 6 months, support running, 14 months)

For women in the community by women from the community

The project in Heerlen is one of the three pioneers. It was housed in a community centre that is situated in a so-called 'underprivileged' area. The co-ordinator is a community-development worker who knows the neighbourhood very well and has many personal contacts with the residents. The first group of volunteers consisted of women who were active in the community centre. Due to his year of experience as a community development worker the co-ordinator not only has knowledge of the neighbourhood but also of the local facility provision structure.

The project is remarkable because referrals take place almost without exception through particularly low-threshold provisions. From primary education, day care centres for children, well-baby clinics, the GP, community work and service centres. If friends and neighbours are included as referring agents, this concerns 81% of the referrals.

The children's day care centre, housed in the community centre, is the main referring agency: almost one third of the families ends up with Home-Start through the children's day-care centre. The referrals by children's day care fit into the tradition of years within children's day-care services to support parents with actions they find 'difficult'. The fact that the co-ordinator literally is two doors further down de corridor makes it easier for mothers to enquire about Home-Start's possibilities, if need be accompanied by the nursery teacher.

Although the project supports families from all over Heerlen, it is very much incorporated in the neighbourhood. The project in Heerlen therefore is to a great extent 'for women in the community by women from the community'.
'Home-Start is simple and appeals to people. The method is easily explained. That is Home-Start's success. You find there is a trend to be close to the people and join the community again. Happily we managed to prevent this centralist trends in Heerlen. It started in 1982 or 1983. I think it is on its way out. Community development workers and socio-cultural workers housed in some shed in the centre of the town and operate from there. We stood up against this development with every weapon at our disposal. The simple human touch, that which binds people, you'll lose it. It's about the human touch, knowing what goes on and being able to respond. Sometimes for a while there's very intense contact.'

Dual co-ordinatorship
The pioneers in the Netherlands started with few facilities. The co-ordinators of the first three projects were given 8 hours a week to set up Home-Start. They did this in addition to their other activities. In practice it appeared that 8 hours a week was not sufficient for setting up and co-ordinating a Home-Start project. The co-ordinator in Heerlen spent considerably more hours on the project than the 8 hours allocated. He ended up in the situation that the activities for Home-Start had to suffer, or his other activities, or his personal life. In addition, as a result of this activities that did not directly benefit the core business were often neglected. For example, administrative tasks and registration.
It took until mid 1997 before the number of co-ordinators for Heerlen was increased and a second co-ordinator was appointed. The second co-ordinator is a neighbourhood resident who was part of the second recruitment of volunteers. It is remarkable that the extra co-ordination hours in six months time did not (yet) result in an increase of the number of volunteers or the number of families receiving support. This was contrary to expectations. Six months after the appointment of the second co-ordinator the relation between the number of co-ordinators and the number of volunteers is below expectations. As yet the cause of this is not clear. A possible explanation might be that the project is 'attempting to catch up'. For example, the co-ordinators indicate that 'at last there is time for registration' and that 'contacts with the volunteers can now be given a new incentive'. Furthermore the increase of the number of co-ordination hours seems to give a new incentive to the contacts with the volunteers. If co-ordinators are under pressure of time, this is usually at the expense of support of the volunteers. A group meeting once every four weeks will easily become once every two months or once per term. As yet it appears that the extra hours are being invested mainly in the contents and quality of the work.

Home-Start Maastricht

Executing institution: local welfare foundation
Sector: socio-cultural work
Number of co-ordinators: 2
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 20 hours and 12 hours (a total of 32 hours; in the first years this was 8 hours a week)
Full-time hours support agent: employed by Symbiose: supports this location 2 or 3 hours a month
Start of the project: 1993
Start support of the families: 1994

Total number of families: 35 (per 01011998, 17 running, 18 finalized)
Total number of volunteers: 20 (per 01011998 available, 14; resigned 6)
Average duration of the support: support ended, 10 months, support running, 11 months

Local colour

Home-Start Maastricht, just like Home-Start Heerlen, is housed in a community centre situated in an 'underprivileged area'. A socio-cultural worker was appointed as co-ordinator and was assisted by a second co-ordinator in 1997. Here too it concerned a volunteer with a career move. As was the case in Heerlen, the appointment of a second co-ordinator did not result as yet in growth of the project. The project manages to reach a high percentage of families and volunteers with low socio-economical status. And, as was the case in Heerlen, the percentage of families (40%) involved with help by, amongst others, social work, school counselling services, the RIAGG and child care institutions is high. What is remarkable is that the 'referral pattern' in Maastricht is different from that of Heerlen. Whereas in Heerlen the emphasis is on low-threshold services in the neighbourhood, in Maastricht 39% of the families met Home-Start through social work and 39% through home care, home help or district nursing. What is also striking in Home-Start Maastricht is the relatively large number of single-parent families and the large number of families with many children and families in which there are a great many problems (multi-problem families).

Relation with child care and or other institutions for social work

For Home-Start Maastricht the relation with other provisions in the families was always an issue. This mainly concerned the 'more severe cases' that had many problems, of a structural nature. The co-ordinators on the subject:

'After a while we became ever more alert to whether the care need expressed by the families to Home-Start is actually the care need of the mother or that of social work institutions. It is easier for us if the families themselves approach us. We now set the requirement that the families themselves call us. Institutions sometimes state that the families cannot do this. But if families are unable to express their need, Home-Start has nothing to offer to them. They won't welcome us then. Every time you have to achieve clarity on what particular care need is being expressed. It is always more difficult through a referral. The parents themselves must have a care need.
Referring agencies must know what Home-Start can and cannot do for families. It must also be crystal clear for the families. The more clarity we show to the referring agencies, the better.
Adequate information is therefore important. I have noticed that a number of institutions do not really know what Home-Start is. I try to get the communication going by giving examples.
Let me give one now. A school spotted a lot of problems in a black and minority ethnic family and felt that help was indicated. Furthermore the school felt that the mother should do homework with the children. The school felt unable to discuss the problems in the family and put its hope in Home-Start. The school's hidden agenda was that once Home-Start was inside for the homework, something would be done about the other problems in the family. This mother does not ask Home-Start to help with the problems, she tells the volunteer: "You must help with the homework". This family was referred to the wrong institution. They really need someone from the language project.
In the near future we will therefore start an intensive information programme for social workers on the job.' (co-ordinator)

Executing institution: regional home care institution
Sector: home care
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: in the period of 1995-1996 20 hours per week; in the first half of 1997 10 hours per week; the second half of 1997 no formation; as of 01011998 18 hours per week.
Full-time hours support agent: employed by Symbiose, number of hours support for this location varies.
Start of the project: 1995 (when in 1994 the project did not take off in socio-cultural work it was accommodated in home care in 1995, with a new co-ordinator)
Start of support families: 1995
Total number of families: 42 (per 01011998 running 19, closed 23)
Total number of volunteers: 25 (per 01011998 available 21; resigned 4)
Average duration of the support: support ended, 11 months; support running, does not apply.

From socio-cultural work to home care

Venray is the third of the first three pioneers in the Netherlands. As in Heerlen and Maastricht Home-Start Venray was initially connected with socio-cultural work and the co-ordinator was a community development worker. The project was to focus initially on an underprivileged area, which housed relatively many black and minority ethnic people. However, the project never really took off and stagnated in the recruitment of volunteers. This was due to several bottlenecks. First of all it was stated that there was no 'co-ordinator who was close to the people to whom the people could turn'. A second bottleneck that was mentioned was the image of the executing foundation for socio-cultural work: 'the foundation does not have a very good reputation and is being associated with problem groups and underprivileged groups'. The rural culture was named as a third bottleneck: 'The relatively low population density implied that residents know each other fairly well and that the degree of social control is considerable. The inability to warrant privacy or the fear of it is an obstacle for Home-Start'. A final reason mentioned was an insufficient basis for the method with the co-ordinator: 'the co-ordinator did not succeed in overcoming his doubts against the method'.

At the end of 1994 a new course was set. The neighbourhood-oriented approach was abandoned. The area of work became Venray and surrounding parishes. As of 01011995 the project was connected with the Foundation Home Care. A new co-ordinator, a social worker, started with a full-time hours of 20 hours per week. Opting for home care was motivated as follows:

'The image of home care is reliability and neutrality. Everybody may encounter disease and nobody can help that. Home care to the people is reliability.' (new co-ordinator)

'Home-Start can be a valuable addition to the domestic approach of Home care. The link with Home-Start was made, also on the initiative of the co-ordinator Practical home help. She was alone and felt the need for support and exchanging views with a colleague.' (district manager Home care)

From a national perspective linking up with home care was interesting, because it is an entirely different sector than socio-cultural work, with a different culture and traditions, another funding system and other financiers.

The new co-ordinator took off energetically. In the period March-April 1995 she gave an introduction course for 11 volunteers and less than six months later 16 families were supported and in the meantime 4 had been closed. In the period October-November 1995 12 new volunteers had meanwhile registered, and they took the preparatory course in early 1996.
This flying start put at the very least a number of bottlenecks in perspective, that had been presented earlier on: it appeared that Home-Start had a right to exist, even in a rural culture. In addition it was felt to be a 'relief' that one of the pilot projects had more full-time hours at its disposal: 20 hours instead of 8. Clearly there was more time for supervision of volunteers, for example, and for keeping up registration data.

With regard to socio-economical background, the project of Venray, with its base in home care, reaches the same families as the projects set up from socio-cultural work. The families have fewer contacts with social work: in Heerlen and Maastricht this concerns 40% of the families, whereas in Venray it concerns 20% of the families. In this project the ranks of volunteers are clearly of a different composition: there are fewer families with a low level of education and more volunteers with a high level of education.

Home-Start as a regional service provision
The first three pilot projects were funded for the larger part by the Ministry of VWS in the experimental phase. A bottleneck that any successful project will sooner or later run into is the continuation of the funding after the experimental phase. The pioneers (Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray) also had to spend a lot of energy on this. The project in Venray had a hard time with this.
In various organisations there was a basis for Home-Start. The foundation Home Care Noord-Limburg and the Home-Start support official (employed by Symbiose) have been looking for a more structural funding system, together with these organisations. In the meantime Home-Start Venray was upheld with an emergency procedure for a year and a half; a more structural funding could not be found. Early 1997 the full-time hours were perforce reduced from 20 to 10 hours and in the summer of 1997 the decision was made to end the project that had proved its right to exist in the region. Although the negotiations between the organisations involved were in full swing, emergency scenarios had been used up. In spite of the fact that 'the sword of Damocles' was over the project all the time, the co-ordinator and the volunteers managed to maintain the fervour within the project. A flourishing project was terminated, although it had relatively many volunteers and supported relatively many families.
When in the autumn of 1997 the various parties arrived at an agreement on a more structural form of funding, it appeared that in fact nobody had actually said Home-Start goodbye or had given up on the project. As if nothing had happened the co-ordinator re-started per 01011998 with 21 volunteers and 19 families.

In spite of the fact that the funding affair caused a lot of commotion, remarkable results were achieved in this respect in Venray. As the project had been registered with home care, the care insurance company came up as a possible financier. For home care is funded for a considerable part by the care insurance companies. The care insurance company initially had some reservations against funding Home-Start and felt it was not opportune to contribute financially to a local project: the insurance

company operates on a regional level and feels that the service provision it finances should be available on a regional level. The municipality of Venray also insisted on a more broad-based funding system because Home-Start Venray also supports families in the surrounding parishes. The care insurance company proposed to give the project a more regional nature and to link up with an existing organisation for low-threshold, voluntary home care. A considerable advantage of Home Care is the involvement of home care in the co-ordination of voluntary work in Noord-Limburg (this function is part of Practical Home Help). The Foundation Home Care Noord-Limburg supported this proposal in its capacity of executing party.

To this effect a regional steering committee ought to be created, in which all interested parties were to be represented, i.e. : the municipalities, the care providers, welfare institutions and the care insurance company. For the time being executing parties are the welfare foundations in the municipality of Venray and Venlo and the Foundation Home Care Noord-Limburg. The collaboration partners have opted for a regional service provision because:

- experience has shown that if Home-Start is localised in a district or neighbourhood, this may cause privacy problems;
- the referring agencies usually are operating on a regional level;
- a regional steering committee is more efficient in the context of consultation and matching than are several local steering committees;
- the regional approach provides better opportunities for the recruitment of volunteers (whereas it need not hamper the local approach in recruitment and supervision);
- all insured people in the region of Noord-Limburg can make use of Home-Start.

The project plan is based on a growth model in which Home-Start develops into a regional service provision. This concerns the region in which Home Care operates, and the RIAGG, the Green Cross and Child and Youth Care.

Funding is based on a fundamental contribution by all parties involved (care and welfare institutions and the care insurance companies). In retrospect, on the basis of a direct benefit principle, accounts are settled with the municipalities (depending on the number of care needs per municipality).

The second crop: Amersfoort, Rotterdam and Emmen

After the experimental phase there was the need for an extended experimental phase. On the one hand in order to get a better grip on the method and work it out in greater detail, on the other to carry out the implementation and expansion.
At the same time the national association for volunteering decided to implement a number of Home-Start projects in its divisions in 1995. It asked and received from the Ministry of VWS a subsidy to set up and carry out three projects in the extended experimental phase. With this subsidy the association set up three projects in Amersfoort, Rotterdam and Emmen. This second crop of Home-Start projects all started with 20 hours of co-ordination.

Home-Start Amersfoort

Executing institution: organisation for volunteering
Sector: the volunteers' sector
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 20 hours
Full-time hours support official: employed by Humanitas; support takes place incidentally, on request by the co-ordinator
Start of the project: 1996
Start support families: 1996
Total number of families: 30 (per 01011998 running 13; closed 17)
Total number of volunteers: 31 (per 01011998 available 28; resigned 3)
Average duration of the support: support ended, 3 months; support running, 7 months

Local colour
The head of department of Humanitas Eemland took to Home-Start and decided to investigate if it might be an activity suitable for their department. In January 1996 the department board decided to make preparations for a project Home-Start in Amersfoort. A local working group was created, that carried out an assessment of needs among institutions in Amersfoort in the field of care, welfare, social work, child care and education. This showed that the objective and mode of operation of Home-Start was condoned by all the institutions that were approached. It was advised to opt for the entire town as area of work, because isolation is occurring in the newer districts in particular, that also have fewer service provisions.
In the spring of 1997 it was affirmed that with a subsidy from the Ministry a co-ordinator could be appointed for 20 hours a week for the first two project years. Just like Venray, Amersfoort took off energetically. In a year and a half the co-ordinator gave a preparatory course for 31 volunteers. Undoubtedly she created fervour and drive. In addition the turnover among volunteers was minimal. Only 3 out of 31 left. Not only did the co-ordinator manage to recruit a lot of volunteers, she also knew how to come into contact with families, so that it was possible to match volunteer and family in an early stage.

The local colour of this first project, set up from the volunteering sector, differs considerably from the projects set up from socio-cultural work and home care. On average the volunteers have had a higher

level of education as do the mothers asking for support. In addition it must be noted that, just like in Heerlen, in 50% of the families there is involvement of the social work institutions. In Amersfoort the average duration of the support is very much shorter: an average of 3 months for the closed families and 7 months for the families running. In Heerlen the average duration of support is respectively 6 and 14 months.

Odd man out?
Although Amersfoort is not the only project in which a man attended the preparatory course, Amersfoort does have the scoop of a male volunteer in a family. It remains to be seen if this is the famous exception to the rule. However, it can be stated that in the experimental and the experimental phase this has been the only link between a male volunteer and a family. His few fellow men could not be matched. As yet families simply do not want to be supported by a man. Although it is often stressed in discussions that fathers too can receive Home-Start support and that male volunteers too can support a family, in practice Home-Start appears to be a women only thing, in which one mother is prepared to develop ties of friendship with another woman.
Nevertheless the question remains interesting whether this one man in Amersfoort will continue to be the exception to the rule or that Home-Start regards it as a challenge to recruit more men. The challenge should not just be to recruit male volunteers but also to support fathers. Departing from the fact that the majority of the mothers appealing to Home-Start do not have paid jobs and live in an isolated position, jobless fathers who take care of children could be a potential target group.

A second scoop for Amersfoort is that the co-ordinator made a career move and became support official.

Home-Start Rotterdam Alexander

Executing institution: organisation for volunteering
Sector: voluntary work
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 20 hours
Full-time hours support official: employed by Humanitas; is appointed for 27 hours as Home-Start support official and supports this location for 2 hours a week, aiming for 2 hours per 14 days.
Start of the project: 1996
Start support families: 1997
Total number of families: 7 (per 010198 5 running, closed 2)
Total number of volunteers: 16 (per 0101998 available 2, resigned 14)
Average duration of the support: support ended: does not apply; support running: does not apply.

Stagnation
Whereas Home-Start Venray and Home-Start Amersfoort were set up rapidly with 20 hours formation, this was not the case in Rotterdam Alexander. Initially the recruitment of volunteers did not run smoothly. When a number of women inquired if it was possible to be apprenticed out to Home-Start this was granted. Eventually 16 volunteers attended the preparatory course. Striking detail: nearly

50% (7) of the volunteers in Rotterdam is from black and minority ethnic origins. The other projects did not or hardly at all manage to recruit black and minority ethnic volunteers.
However, after the preparatory course there was a rapid turnover: from the 16 volunteers 14 resigned in a brief span of time. The fact that there were no families was discouraging and became the main factor in the outflow of volunteers. As their motivation the volunteers stated: paid jobs (one third); another trainee address (25%); no babysitters (1); the training takes more time (1). In addition it appeared impossible to match the two male volunteers. One volunteer states: 'It is very frustrating. Your start with an enthusiastic group of people and you are left with two'.

In retrospect the co-ordinator feels she might have been more selective in the recruiting of volunteers. She would choose differently now, in recruiting new volunteers. In the first course there were two men, but the families did not want to be supported by a man so the men could not be placed. 'Male candidates should know what their chances are.' In addition there were volunteers with a vocational training education in the area of care and welfare. These volunteers required a lot of attention in order to function well: they had to let go of their professional knowledge and training knowledge in order to become a 'Home-Starter'. The co-ordinator indicates that next time she will use clearer selection criteria beforehand, before people attend the course. It is 'frustrating' for both sides if after the preparatory course volunteers cannot be placed or only with difficulty. In addition, it has a stagnating effect on a project.

At the same time it is difficult to draw the attention of referring agencies for Home-Start. Several factors appear to be at work here. At the start the project in Zevenkamp (later extended to Rotterdam Alexander) had hardly any relations with other service provisions. And the co-ordinator did not know the neighbourhood. Although this in itself need not be an impediment, is does render the start of a project more vulnerable. For their is no 'obvious' relationship with referring agencies and there is every chance of referring parties adopting a wait-and-see attitude. This vulnerable position was reinforced because Home-Start was not a local initiative.

In addition the programme was not easily accessible.' It is difficult to work from a location outside the neighbourhood. It raises the threshold, whereas Home-Start should be a low threshold provision. You have to become a part of the neighbourhood you work in. I do not require an office at all costs. I think it is important that you are visible in the neighbourhood. For mothers, volunteers and referring agencies.' (co-ordinator)

It must be remarked here that in the initial phase nearly all projects find that it is difficult to create a basis for Home-start among potential referring agencies at first. Often their reaction is that they are doing this themselves already. Other institutions will then perceive Home-Start to be competition rather than an addition to their own service provision. Particularly so, since Home-Start makes use of volunteers, whereas the referring agency uses professionals. In addition, immediately the question is asked if volunteers are able to provide a similar degree of quality as the professionals. A co-ordinator or support official must be very persuasive if they are to explain the difference between Home-Start's provision and that of other (specific) professional organisations and if they are to identify it as an addition.
The practice shows, by the way, that co-ordinators who find it hard to handle a concept such as friendship or are insufficiently equipped to present the method, are unable to adequately answer questions of referring agencies with regard to the uniqueness of Home-Start.

In Rotterdam Alexander it was a conglomerate of (unfavourable) factors that had an accumulating effect. It was difficult to find the right volunteers, so they conceded to the composition of the ranks of volunteers. Using trainees as Home-Start volunteers is vulnerable for several reasons. The voluntary nature of the support can be pressurised. But the need for support of families cannot always be expressed in terms of time and may take longer than the training period.
At a crucial moment Rotterdam had volunteers but no families, resulting in volunteers departing. If at that moment a referring agency registers a family, volunteers are no longer available. Then the co-ordinator decides to support the families herself, at the expense of the voluntary nature of the support. The co-ordinator supported three families herself: 'That is rather a lot, but you cannot abandon the families.' (In February 1998 the co-ordinator starts with a new group of 8 volunteers.)
The accumulative effect described puts a co-ordinator in a difficult position: you are all set to go, and you have to cope with adversity all the time.

Black and minority ethnic volunteers
The co-ordinator in Rotterdam was the only one who managed to recruit black and minority ethnic volunteers: nearly 50% of the volunteers. More than anyone else, she therefore had to face questions regarding not only the support of black and minority ethnic families but also the use of black and minority ethnic volunteers. There is hardly any experience with that. The co-ordinator:

'Black and minority ethnic families that want a Dutch volunteer are afraid of gossip and want to integrate in Dutch society. Often they want their children to learn to speak Dutch well. For closer contacts black and minority ethnic families like someone from their own origins. Dutch families sometimes do not want a black woman in the house. Families are so ready to judge. They cannot see beyond the personal appearance. I find this difficult to handle.' (black and minority ethnic volunteer)

The district manager spots the bottlenecks in Rotterdam Alexander: 'In spite of extensive PR there have hardly been any referrals; if there are any, the need for support will be too complex, so a math with a volunteer cannot be made; the lack of a social infra-structure in Rotterdam Alexander, moving the project... In the meantime parties involved want to take a time-out and evaluate the project: in this respect it has to be determined what exactly Home-Start needs in Rotterdam Alexander and a time schedule must be set up: what must be done when. On the basis of this conclusions have to be drawn and recommendations devised. Then a wise decision can be made on whether to stop or to continue.' (district manager volunteers' organisation)

Home-Start Emmen

Executing institution: organisation for volunteering
Sector: voluntary sector
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 19 hours
Full-time hours support official: 32 hours, of which alternating hours for this location
Start of the project: 1997
Start support families: 1997
Total number of families: 12 (per 01011998 running closed 3)
Total number of volunteers: 11 (per 010199 available 7, resigned 4)
Average duration support: support ended: 3 months; support running: 6 months

Local colour

Compared to Amersfoort and Venray the project set up in Emmen did not result in a brilliant start either. With 12 supported families and 11 volunteers it is a relatively small project with little growth till 01011998. It is difficult to see why and whether this will continue to be the case in the near future. Recruiting volunteers did not run smoothly. In 1998 this was being tackled intensively. In addition the project will also focus on Emmen's 'outskirts-villages' in 1998. In the course of 1998 it will become clear what the effect of these extra efforts will be.

As for the level of education of the mothers and the volunteers, Emmen is like Home-Start Amersfoort. However, compared to Amersfoort there are fewer families already involved with social work and there are no black and minority ethnic families appealing to Home-Start. Unique to Emmen is that Home-Start here has its own dwellings, which had an opening ceremony in 1997.

Emphasis in the support on preconditions and extension

Emmen is part of the northern district of the association Humanitas. Humanitas has a structure in which use is made of districts and department boards. The districts and departments are mostly autonomous. In addition the association has a national bureau and on a district level SA-consultants (social activation). Several SA consultants attended the preparatory course for Home-Start. The projects set up from the national association Humanitas can turn to these consultants for support in the setting up and execution of Home-Start. Therefore Humanitas has implemented the support into its own internal association's structure.

Other organisations, officials of which attended the Home-Start preparatory course are VSW-institutions (welfare support organisations), S&O (Spel- en Opvoedingsondersteuning, Play and Parenting Support) and local welfare organisations. These supporting parties are incorporated into the structure of the professional care and welfare sector.

There are clear differences in emphasis in the way in which support officials (want to) carry out their role. Officials of professional care and welfare institutions emphasise primarily the contents and development of working methods. (Which is not to say they ignore framework conditions, policy incorporation et cetera). SA consultants will emphasise network development, assessment of needs, the creation of a basis and commitment and looking for funding. In this respect the SA consultants pay a great deal of attention to the name and publicity of the method.

Several SA consultants have reservations about the supporting structure for the contents, which is felt to be a kind of 'overkill' besides existing consultation structures.

This is related to the culture in the association and the notion that the association has been putting into practice the Home-Start philosophy for years with a different type of buddy project: in short, they already have the expertise. The national association carries out a lot of projects that can be characterised as buddy projects or 'by and on behalf of' projects. Home-Start is one of them. However, Home-Starts uses a paid co-ordinator. This sometimes creates tension. Whereas the other project co-ordinators of the association do work similar to that of the Home-Start co-ordinators, they do it for free.

'We, Humanitas, must take care not to become too professional. Our basis is, volunteers. End of discussion. And your have to watch out that the volunteers do not take over the task of the professional and end up on that route.' (supporting official)

Self-willed?

Within Humanitas the northern district has a reputation of being self-willed. They like to be inspired by Home-Start, but they do not want to be tied down. As a result of this the philosophy is used in a flexible way. A district manager and a support official

'We carry out more projects, also successfully. There are other successful buddy projects and for example the friendly home visiting projects. There are several similar initiatives and this creates a certain tension. The department board decides how things are to be done. In Leeuwarden the plan is clearly to work with a paid co-ordinator, but in a small community such as Smallingerland we start carefully: while awaiting a paid co-ordinator, we are creating a basis. In view of the expected size of the demand a paid co-ordinator is necessary in Leeuwarden. If you expect 8 families per year in a community, you can use a volunteer co-ordinator. We started a similar project with a volunteer co-ordinator because there is no money for a paid co-ordinator. This is now the job of a board member and an SA consultant.' (district manager)

'The northern district has a 'from the bottom' up approach. Consultants support the department boards and these are fairly autonomous. In other districts in corporation in the local community is sometimes lacking. They tend to focus on the project. We do stimulate changes and innovations but if a department board says no that's it. In the assessment of needs for Home-Start the incentive in other district is too district-oriented. We don't do that and that fits in with our opting for the from the bottom up approach. We have a lot of expertise and contacts on the local level. One of the grievances of local institutions often is that provincial or national clubs drop innovations in places that they –the locals- must pay for, into the bargain. Sometimes this is at odds with their own policy. You should not drop projects locally on a command basis.
The best thing in my opinion is the approach in which to create commitment at the same time. It is our task to develop matters that are suited to the local community. In the end the question is whether it contributes to people's welfare. So if there is a need and there are volunteers but no funding, we do make a move. If you set too many restrictions on a project, local initiatives will be created that do similar things, but do not use the name Home-Start. We do both. Home-Start by the book and projects inspired by Home-Start.' (support offficial)

Collaboration in Zuid-Holland: Dordrecht and Leiden

In the province of Zuid-Holland several organisations applied to the provincial authorities for a subsidy to set up and carry out at the local level one or more projects. The province was enthusiastic about the method and asked the organisations to combine their efforts and to make themselves jointly responsible for the development of Home-Start in Zuid-Holland. This concerned the association for volunteering Humanitas, the support organisation JanZeuven and Spel en Opvoedingsondersteuning (S&O) Zuid-Holland. The province made a two-year subsidy available for three pilot loctions. The projects in Dordrecht, Leiden and Gouda were financed with this and can be regarded as the third crop of Home-Start projects. Whereas the second crop of Home-Start projects started entirely under the command of Humanitas district boards, this is not the case with the third crop. Although the immediate execution of these projects is assigned to the association - the association is the employer of the co-ordinator- the support is assigned to the support organisation JanZeuven and Spel en Opvoedingsondersteuning (S&O) which is a part of child and youth care. The projects in Dordrecht, Leiden and Gouda are therefore directed from several fields of work or sectors: on the one hand the voluntary sector and on the other the welfare sector and child and youth care.

Home-Start Dordrecht

Institutions involved: organisation for volunteering
Sector: volunteer sector
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 20 hours
Full-time hours support official: employed by JanZeuven; supports this location for 5 hours a week
Start of the project: 1997
Start support of the families: 1997
Total number of families: 5 (no families closed as yet; 4 matched in January 1998)
Total number of volunteers: 9 (no volunteer has resigned as yet)
Average duration of the support: does not apply

Incorporation in the local infrastructure

In Dordrecht, as in Amersfoort, the initiative to set up a Home-Start project comes from the department board of Humanitas. At the beginning of 1998 Dordrecht is a starting project in which the first 5 volunteers have only just begun to support a family. What is remarkable is the warm-hearted atmosphere with a great deal of care for the volunteers.

From the perspective of a strength-weakness analysis the lack of a sound network in Dordrecht is a weakness. At the outset the co-ordinator, the support official and the executing institution do not have a network relevant to Home-Start. This requires input first of all. For the co-ordinator and the support official the building of a network is a major concern: 'We do not want to be an island. You feel that in Dordrecht Humanitas is not in the forethought of organisations operating in parenting support.' The building of a network was hampered initially because a co-ordinator had been appointed but there was no place to work. This clearly was a problem in the initial phase. But accessibility is also a bottleneck for the families: 'Look, I work 20 hours for Home-Start. I am not always in the office. When I'm not in the answering machine is on. But I know I miss out on families because they do not like to leave a

message on the machine. At present I cannot live up to the standards of low threshold and accessibility. It is my belief that in the near future I will be able to do that, if need be with the aid of the volunteers.' (co-ordinator)

Between enthusiasm and care

The enthusiasm and care with which the co-ordinator set out are also remarkable. This enthusiasm and care are sometimes at odds with each other. The method, for example, provides clear guidelines for the minimum group size in a preparatory course for volunteers. The preparation of volunteers must take place in a fair-sized group because volunteers will mainly learn the specific skills that are relevant to Home-Start by comparing themselves with other volunteers. From the viewpoint of enthusiasm and the desire to give the project a sound and speedy start, such guidelines can be a nuisance, as a result of which Home-Start Dordrecht will look for alternatives.

'I have 6 people on the course now. And 3 more have registered, but they cannot start at the moment. That's is why I will probably give a course for them in January. I'm also considering a simultaneous course for 1 person. That would be on a one-to-one basis. Well, I mean it's all very well to go by the rules for a preparatory course but I don't want to keep people waiting too long. Now they are motivated. There is an element of tension between the guidelines and the reality of the day, and so I bend the rules a little. That caused me to reflect on the duration of the course, the contents and the effect on team-building. In a number of weeks I will have a group of 6 people who have been through a lot together and have had fun together. And I will have a group of 4 that missed out on all that.' (co-ordinator)

At the same time the co-ordinator expresses the other side of the medal

'Between being accepted and being sent on a job there's a gap. There is little intrinsic knowledge in Zuid-Holland. I feel that we need a monitor of the philosophy. Right now there is a tendency of 'take it', 'establish your project'. That I adapt things, change them ... if I discuss this I break the tendency. I miss some sort of supervision. In particular regarding the intrinsic side. It has not been developed sufficiently. I now advocate taking some time out. So, no further growth just now, but evaluation. It's all very well just planting things all over the place, but if you don't watch out where you plant things and they're in the full glare of the sun... well.' (co-ordinator)

Home-Start Leiden

Executing institution: organisation for volunteering
Sector: volunteers sector
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 20 hours a week
Full-time hours support official: employed at the Foundation Spel and Opvoedingsondersteuning Zuid-Holland; appointed for 8 hours a week as support official for Home-Start
Start of the project: 1997
Start of the support of the families: 1998
Number of volunteers: 7
Number of families: -
Average duration of the support: does not apply

Incorporation in the local infrastructure

It has already been stated that Home-Start Dordrecht and Rotterdam 'wrestled' in the starting phase with 'being insufficiently incorporated' in the local infrastructure of care and welfare institutions. The association for volunteering, responsible at the local level for the execution of the projects, does not maintain, as a matter of course, relations with referring agencies relevant to Home-Start, in Rotterdam Alexander nor in Dordrecht.

In Zuid-Holland the support officials had been assigned to implement the project locally. Incorporation and sound networks at the local level appear to be of major importance, as is the profile of the method as being complementary to the existing service provision. This worked very well in Leiden. In particular because the method is clearly different from the regular service provision. The support official states that if Home-Start's identity were to vanish, the projects will not be able to distinguish themselves and will have no additional value whatsoever. Or, in other words, if the method is no longer carried out in a pure unadulterated manner, Home-Start will begin to look like the other service provisions in the care and welfare sector and will have lost its justification. The project is received with enthusiasm by the care and welfare organisations. Success factors mentioned by the support official in this context, are: S&O's extensive networks, the S&O expertise and the collaboration between the three organisations, each contributing their own expertise.

At the same time Leiden worked actively toward involving the collaboration partners in the developments surrounding Home-Start.

'First you have to allow for a year to promote Home-Start. Advocate a from the bottom up co-operation and gain the partners' trust. If you can't achieve this you'd better start elsewhere. A project group is an absolute must for a Home-Start project.' (support official)

In Leiden, too, after two years the question was raised in what way Home-Start can be continued and in what way funding can be arranged. One of the options is that Home-Start will connect with one of the local organisations for care and welfare in two years time. The municipality remains an interested onlooker.

Local colour

Home-Start Leiden started in the autumn of 1997. As of 1 January 1998 there have been 7 volunteers that can be used at any time. In January 1998 the first families are matched. The homogeneous nature of the body of volunteers is particularly striking: they are all very well educated and of native Dutch origins. The co-ordinator:

'Our first group of volunteers was of a very homogeneous composition. And yet we started out with great enthusiasm. At first it was difficult to create a more mixed group. But the project has to be given a profile. Now I want to steer towards more diversity and connect to the target group. This means that we will look nearer to the source, start at the bottom. There is now a connection to welfare organisations.' (co-ordinator)

What is also remarkable is that the support is twofold. On the one hand the co-ordinator plays a part in the contacts with the collaboration partners, on the other she also supports on the content's level.

'I attended the preparatory course for volunteers. I want to be near from the very start. That, I feel, is essential. Then I can be a stand-in. If she is ill, I'm available.

As a support official you have a role in improving the intense nature of the method. There will always be situations in which you question whether to use Home-Start or not. Your must look for the boundaries to Home-Start and you must discuss them together. That's why it is important to be near.' (support official)

Under their own steam: Roermond, Venlo and Groningen

To a certain extent Roermond, together with Venlo and Groningen, holds a unique position among the other projects in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase. In these projects the starting point is at the local level and not on the basis of an experiment subsidy from the Ministry of VWS or an encouragement subsidy by the provincial authorities. This also applies to the welfare foundation DISCK in Rotterdam, that had two of its staff members attend a preparatory course for support officials in 1997 and is hoping to have its own Home-Start project in 1998/1999. In the near future it will be interesting to see if the implementation and extension in these projects will take a different course than in the other described projects.

Home-Start Roermond

Executing institution: local welfare foundation
Sector: socio-cultural work
Number of co-ordinators: 2
Full-time hours of co-ordinators: 18 hours and 8 hours (a total of 24 hours)
Full-time hours of support official: employed by Symbiose, supports this location for 2 to 3 hours a month
Start of the project: started as Thuis-Start (home start) in 1995; in 1996/1997 transformed into a Home-Start project
Start support of the families: 1997
Total number of volunteers: 26 (per 01011998 available 16; 10 resigned)
Total number of families: 19 (per 01011998 10 support running; support ended: 9)
Average duration of the support: support ended: 8 months; support running: 14 months)

From Thuis-Start to Home-Start

The welfare foundation in Roermond was very much taken with Home-Start. In choosing the first three pilot projects in Limburg Roermond missed out, however. Although this was a disappointment, it did not stop Roermond from developing on its own a form of low-threshold support for families with young children. The Home-Start concept was a source of inspiration here. The welfare foundation named this new service Thuis-Start (Start at home). As in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray the co-ordinator of Thuis-Start encountered all sorts of questions and bottlenecks in the development of the new service provision. By the way, to a great extent the same bottlenecks and questions the three pioneers and later on others as well, had to deal with. The difference, however, was that the Thuis-Start co-ordinator had to 'wreck his brains' over this by himself, whereas the Home-Start co-ordinators could fall back upon a consultation and support structure. When the experimental phase expired, Roermond indicated that it would like to join and transform its own service provision into a Home-Start project. The Thuis-Start co-ordinator became a Home-Start co-ordinator. In the course of 1997 a second co-ordinator was appointed. Together they had at their disposal 24 hours full-time.

If the level of education of the mothers and volunteers is point of departure, the local colour of the project can be compared to that of the other projects that were set up from socio-cultural work. The level of education of both volunteers and women is low. However, the families are less often involved with social work than in Heerlen and Maastricht.

Here too we find a dual co-ordinatorship, the second co-ordinator being a volunteer from the Thuis-Start phase who was promoted. A difference with other projects organised by socio-cultural work is that the project in Roermond is not situated in a neighbourhood centre but is organised from the central office in the town, emphasizing the urban approach.

Holier than thou?

The transition from Thuis-Start to Home-Start has given an incentive to tackle a number of bottlenecks that the co-ordinator in the Thuis-Start phase found hard to handle. The at times difficult course of the Thuis-Start project and the new fervour after the 'transformation' resulted in Home-Start Roermond being particularly eager to carry out the method as accurately as possible. The supervision of volunteers is in the centre here. The co-ordinators:

'The preparatory course consists of six days from 10 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m. The course does not suffice. It should contain much more about people's own attitude. We can talk all we want about a different attitude, but how do we achieve this? Volunteers tend to project too much of their personal lives on another person. You find that volunteers are ready to judge all the time: feel that the family should do things the way they themselves or other people do them.' (co-ordinator)

'Once every six weeks there are group meetings for volunteers. Sometimes this is a general meeting, sometimes it is a theme meeting. The discussion is about themes that the volunteers run into in the families: for instance privacy. At these group meetings we do not discuss or exchange information about the families. We do that in supervision talks. We have them every three weeks, it used to be every five weeks. We saw that it was often necessary to spend more time on them. For example if volunteers have black and minority ethnic families or if the volunteers themselves are going through a hard time. We ask the volunteers to write a report on their visits to the families. If they don't, individual counselling is going to be very difficult. On the basis of these reports we can distinguish the subjects that are an issue in the families and then we can respond to that.' (co-ordinator)

Volunteers with high levels of education

'Our volunteers groups are all different. The last group is quite elusive, too high a level of education as a group in fact. They don't have any questions during the course. I will ask: " Are you sure you understand all this?" and they will say: "Yes, you were very clear.' That really worries me. Perhaps we should develop another course for people with high levels of education.

Persons with less high levels of education are easier to match. They are closer to the client. You have to connect to people. Don't use difficult language, for example. You must not judge or be prejudiced but be patient, see if things are changing at all. You have to be careful with volunteers that have high levels of education. They are the ones that develop a certain plan or think, this is where they should be heading. And they will often expect too much and the mothers cannot live up to the expectations. Then you find that either the volunteer or the family is disappointed. The ability to always stand besides the mother is very important, then it's going to be alright. That is how you build trust.' (co-ordinator)

Home-Start Venlo

Executing institution: welfare foundation
Sector: socio-cultural work
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 24 hours a week
Full-time hours support official: employed by Symbiose; support of this location for 4 hours a month
Start of the project: 1997
Start support of the families: 1998
Number of volunteers: 5 (none have resigned so far)
Number of families: (support of families has not started yet)
Average duration of the support: does not apply

Well prepared at the outset

The welfare support foundation in Venlo took the initiative for a Home-Start project in Venlo. In 1997 a start was made with a steering committee composed of members from every layer of the community. This quickly transformed into a regional steering committee on behalf of the projects in Venlo and Venray. The steering committee's assignment was to achieve a regional basis for the incorporation of Home-Start in the region. The regional approach was related to the point of view of the care insurance company, that required a regional approach as a condition for co-funding.
At the start time was taken to inform the institutions and to develop networks. As a result of this families were already registered when the volunteers were still engaged in their preparatory course. It is interesting that in Venlo the reverse of Rotterdam occurred. In Venlo there were families but no volunteers, whereas in Rotterdam there were volunteers but no families as yet. Venlo therefore had the advantage that the enthusiasm and drive created in the preparatory course could be used immediately. Several co-ordinators have stated that it is disastrous for the volunteers' enthusiasm if they have to wait too long before they can start in a family. On the other hand there should not be too much time between a registration and a matching. That is not to the advantage of a family and waiting lists, in particular in a starting project, contain the risk of referral agencies forgetting about the project or not taking it seriously anymore.

One-man's job? (one woman's job?)

In the last few months of the extended experimental phase Home-Start Venlo began its work. The welfare foundation asked and got a subsidy from the local authorities to set up a project on the condition that after three years it would consist of at least 25 volunteers and 25 families.
In the meantime 3 of the 5 projects in Limburg had a dual co-ordinatorship. The co-ordinator in Venlo however, had a one-man's job. Although Venray is very near to Venlo, the decision to bring Venray to a halt was made just as Venlo started. It is interesting that when as of 01011998 Venray was allowed to continue, the co-ordinators of Venray and Venlo immediately worked closely together. Combined they set up a campaign for the recruitment of new volunteers, held meeting's at each other's locations in the context of the preparatory course for volunteers and held joint presentations on the method at regional institutions. In addition there was an agreement that each would help out if this proved to be necessary due to unforeseen circumstances.
Like the co-ordinator in Dordrecht the co-ordinator in Venlo also mentions the need for a form of reviewing among colleagues. She indicates that the current trend of working on a project basis in the

welfare sector entails a lot of 'one man's jobs'. Most project co-ordinators however, prefer to work in a team: 'There are many advantages in being part of a team. In this context I also benefit greatly from the co-ordinator's consultations here in Limburg. I always feel stronger after that.'

Urban areas versus rural areas

In the context of co-operation Venray and Venlo have carried out simultaneously almost identical recruitment campaigns for new volunteers. What was remakable was that the campaign in Venlo resulted in 5 volunteers and in Venray 15; in addition both volunteer groups were entirely different. It must be observed however that the campaign in Venlo was conducted even more intensively because the co-ordinator made use of her contacts within socio-cultural work and even held presentations on Home-Start at morning coffee meetings. Both co-ordinators feel that the difference is due to Venlo being an urban area whereas Venray has a rural culture. Maastricht, Roermond and Heerlen also mention such differences. The co-ordinators in the more urban areas believe that the recruitment of volunteers is very time and energy consuming and that the benefits do not always compensate the expenses.

Home-Start Groningen

Executing institution: organisation for volunteering
Sector: voluntary sector
Number of co-ordinators: 1
Full-time hours co-ordinator: 12 hours
Full-time hours support official: employed at Humanitas, support on behalf of this location varies
Start of the project: 1997
Start support of the families: 1998
Number of volunteers: 6 (none have resigned as yet)
Number of families: 5 (no endings as yet)
Average duration of the support: does not apply

Mutual benefits

In Groningen the association for volunteering is a respected co-operation partner for the municipal authorities and for the professional provisions as well. As far as voluntary home help is concerned, the association, with 780 volunteers, is a major partner. Whereas the association in Dordrecht, Rotterdam and Leiden does not hold a specific position in the local care and welfare infrastructure, this is very much the case in Groningen. The association indicates that it is primarily engaged in 'the organising of social networks around people who are unable to do so permanently, temporarily or as yet'.
In addition the municipality of Groningen has contracted out the integration plan for asylum seekers to the association. Humanitas Opvang Asielzoekers (shelter asylum seekers) and Statushouders (resident permit holders) (HOAS) has at its disposal 300 volunteers. In addition to playing a part in the integration plan they will, after its completion, stay in contact for another two years with the people they have supported. Thus they hope to be able to detect possible problems and to prevent the arising of problems. 'In particular with regard to Home-Start there are great expectations in the context of mutual benefits for both projects. Among HOAS potential families can be found but also potential volunteers.

'At present we are keeping an eye on a number of people who are still in the integration plan but in nine months time could possibly be Home-Start volunteers. I believe that in two years time we can have a good mix of native Dutch and black and minority ethnic volunteers and families.' (co-ordinator)

Opposition from referring agencies against volunteers

Groningen is a starting project, running into opposition from professional care and welfare providers, as do many other projects. One aspect of this is the opposition against volunteers at a professional social worker's level. For the association, being a volunteering organisation, this is nothing new.

'The more the authorities or the field of work defines a group as difficult, the more it is being said that volunteers are not up to it. If you reduce it to one of the most basic human needs, i.e. that everybody wants to be surrounded by people on a level of equality, then that puts everything in an entirely new perspective.' (district manager)

It is interesting that in Groningen strategies are being developed, actively, in order to tackle opposition, prejudice and judgements among professionals towards volunteers. For the benefit of social workers, for example, a seminar on volunteering will be organised.

The circumstance that Humanitas is a major partner for professional provisions is being emphasised by the fact that Humanitas has been invited to participate in the working group Meeting Point Prevention. Until recently a working group consisting solely of professional organisations.

Organisers of social network

The association for volunteering Groningen considers it its core business to organise support networks on behalf of people unable to do this themselves. In addition to asylum seekers and resident permit holders they work, for example, with psychiatric patients, older dementia patients and isolated families. The district manager indicates that the assignment comprises much more than visiting people in their own homes. For instance, they also organise holiday camps for children from isolated families.

'We do a lot about social isolation. We visited Turkish and Moroccan women who have been inside their homes for ten, fifteen years and are in complete isolation. We ask ourselves, why is it that specific groups do not integrate in the community? Then you find that the lower wage groups and people from a black and minority ethnic background least often make use of socio-cultural work. Why is it that people don't do this? Why do refugee children not come to the playground? We asked the target groups themselves. The refugee parents, the mentally handicapped... we have many black and minority ethnic volunteers, for example in work consisting of visiting the elderly. We have a sound incorporation.

Generally speaking, Home-Start is what we do. It is all a matter of course. We called it 'lean on and support contacts'. Home-Start has the advantage of a name and reputation. Home-Start certainly functioned as a catalyst because the shift to policy-based points of departure was made. For us this work is important: we make use of this philosophy in our publicity campaign.

At the same time Home-Start is in a tight pattern. We did the same in coping with bereavement. That too we have been monitoring from all sides for quite a while. You need to do that if you want to develop diversity later on.

But from our perspective we sometimes feel that it is all just a little bit overdone. We do the same but with fewer means. It would be interesting if the national bureau were to investigate why it is possible in Groningen: that Groningen is successful, without all this manpower and means. To my mind the

relation of 1 hour co-ordination per 1 volunteer is too much. We usually have 50 matchings with 20 hours full-time.
The Home-Start co-ordinator currently has 12 hours at her disposal. We took care to have a full network first. Only then did we appoint the co-ordinator.' (district manager)

Home-Start Groningen appears to have sound points of departure to move on to an in-depth approach in organising social support structures around the families. It has already been stated that as yet this aspect has not been sufficiently developed within Home-Start. Home-Start provides a social support structure for the duration of the support, but there would be surplus value if Home-Start would contribute to the families making a better use of support structures available to them in principle, on a more structural basis.
In view of the experiences in Groningen with black and minority ethnic volunteers and families it would appear their are opportunities for Home-Start, too, to move on to an intensified approach concerning these aspects.

What is remarkable
Above developments were described that make projects stand out or that characterise a project. Some developments are quite specific for one or two projects but the other projects can learn from these experiences. Other developments occur in several projects or sometimes in all projects. In this paragraph we wish to discuss what is striking when one compares the developments. Findings from previous chapters will also be dealt with here. Some elements will be discussed in greater detail, others will merely be mentioned.

What is remarkable: relationship between the number of full-time hours, volunteers and families
The next chapter will be a rendition per project of the relationship between the full-time hours a co-ordinator has at her disposal, the number of volunteers and the number of supported families. In spite of the fact that the English situation cannot simply be compared with the Dutch situation, in the table below you will nevertheless find, for reasons of comparison, the English guideline.

With 20 hours full-time per week a co-ordinator could approximately supervise a team of 20 volunteers and support 30 families: the guideline developed in England for the relation co-ordination hours, number of volunteers and number of families is 1:1:1,5.

Table 16
Relation formation co-ordinator: volunteers: families per 01011998 (abs.)

		Total suported families
Families		
Heerlen	43:14:15	(33)
Maastricht	32:13:17	(35)
Venray	20:21:19	(42)
Amersfoort	20:28:13	(30)
Rotterdam	20:12:5	(7)
Emmen	19:6:9	(12)
Roermond	24:26:10	(20)

General guideline based on HS-UK 20:20:30

Departing from the UK guideline it is not unusual in the UK that volunteers support more than one family. In the Dutch projects this appears to be the exception rather than the rule, a volunteer seldom supports more than one family. The guideline that 1 full-time hour suffices for the supervision of 1 volunteer seems realistic however, in view of the experiences of the various projects. The (at times) major differences present (as yet) seem to be related to the circumstance that these are starting projects or projects that have not had sufficient support until recently. In addition, Home-Start NL has not developed to the full and is in the process of doing so. Home-Start is out of its childhood stage but is by no means yet grown up. It cannot be stated exactly here what the size of the fully developed project will be. For the time being a Dutch guideline of approximately 1:1:1 seems feasible and desirable. However, as yet only a few projects have managed to achieve this relation.

It has already been stated in the introduction that a random indication can be ungenerous to the projects. Therefore the following table renders the relation between the number of volunteers that attended a preparatory course and the number of families supported in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase.

Table 19
Number of volunteers that attended a course and number of families supported per project in the experimental phase (abs.)

	Volunteers	families
Heerlen	22	33
Maastricht	20	35
Venray	25	42
Amersfoort	31	30
Rotterdam	16	7
Emmen	11	12
Roermond	26	19

It appears from both tables that in the projects that have been running for a longer time the relation between volunteers and families is approximately 1:1. In addition it has become clear that in these projects the volunteers have supported on average 1.5 family.

What is remarkable: the average duration of the support
In the UK the average duration of the support is 12 to18 months. Generally speaking, the support is at its most intensive in the initial stage and is less intensive towards the end.
In the Netherlands there are, for the time being, considerable differences in the duration of the support per project. In Emmen and Amersfoort at the ending families had been supported on average for 3 months, whereas the families in Maastricht and Venray received respectively 10 and 11 months of support.
With regard to these figures it must be noted that these are average figures that do not provide insight into the variations. Among families for whom the support was ended there are those that received only 1 month of support but also those that received support during 31 months.
The 'through-put' of families is largest in Amersfoort and Emmen. In the other projects this varies between 6 and 11 months. Amersfoort is remarkable not only because of the number of families that were reached but also because of the number of endings of family support.

For the development of working methods it is interesting to look for an explanation of these differences. Does the demand differ per project? Do some projects attract 'more severe' cases than others? Do some projects tend to push toward an ending more than others? Do some projects consider a demand too difficult, whereas elsewhere the demand is being met? Other questions are interesting as well: does the duration of the support influence the outflow of volunteers?
From the method's perspective a short but also a long duration generates questions. From the point of view that Home-Start often plays a part in the clarification of the demand behind the demand, an average duration of 3 months is rather short. In addition, a swift through-put generates questions regarding 'statements' from the UK that families will invariably try out the volunteers in the initial stage of the support. If the support is too short, there is no time for such matters.
From the perspective that Home-Start UK supports families for 12 to 18 months on average, it might be concluded that the support in the Netherlands has a mind of its own.
Not only a short duration, a long one also calls for questions. Is long always better? Could there be a turning point in which the process of building confidence and reinforcing the ability to solve one's own problems shifts towards dependence and 'fear of the moment the volunteer leaves'. In this respect projects should be allowed to ask themselves and each other some critical questions.

What is remarkable: differences per type of work / sector
It is remarkable that the local colour of the projects is being influenced by the sector or the field of work to which they affiliated themselves. To a certain extent the project adapts itself to the 'host' or 'hostess'. For example, projects incorporated in socio-cultural work with its tradition of working in underprivileged areas, manage to reach both parents and volunteers with lower socio-economic status. The projects incorporated in the voluntary work sector reach a group of parents that is more mixed as to socio-economic background and, compared to welfare work, here we find the volunteers with relatively high levels of education. In this respect the home care project finds itself in the middle.
Following these findings it is interesting to try and establish what colour Home-Start will have if it is being set up in for example a self-organisation of black and minority ethnic people.

What is remarkable: incorporation in the local infrastructure
If the developments in the various sectors are being compared, it appears that it is important for a starting project to conduct a sound environment analysis. If the executing institution, the co-ordinator or the support official have at their disposal a sound network and the trust of the referring agencies, the recruitment of volunteers and families can be started swiftly. If this is not the case, or if for some or other reason the referring agencies feel aversion or reserve towards the project, an enthusiastic recruitment of volunteers and families may be very frustrating indeed. Referring agencies forget about the project. Volunteers cannot be matched and leave. The project comes to a halt and it is difficult to keep up the fervour.
It appears from the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase that some projects did not pay enough attention to Home-Start's public relations. In this context a local or regional working group or steering committee appears to be valuable for the basis among the institutions and Home-Start's incorporation in the local and regional infrastructure in the field of parenting support. However, this phase must not be underestimated even if a sound network is present.
It remains to be seen if new projects must always set out with 20 hours full-time. If the co-ordinator is obliged to start with the construction of a network and with informing the institutions, it would seem that in this initial stage less full-time hours are will suffice (as well). Finally we wish to state that the 'needs assessments' carried out by the volunteering sector to gain insight -at the local level- into the

need for Home-Start and the basis for the method among referring agencies and local authorities, can be 'tricky'. There is a great risk of a 'supermarket effect'. If you can shop for free you want it all. As soon as you have to pay up or if it would prevent your buying something else instead, many of the desired products are less attractive all of a sudden. Almost invariably it appeared from the needs assessment that the referring agencies took to the method and felt that there was a need for it. But this guarantees by no means that there will automatically be a relationship of co-operation. You need to invest in a co-operation relation just like in any other relationship. New projects would do well to incorporate the building of a network in their plans for a phased procedure.

What is remarkable: referring agencies and referral patterns
It is remarkable that there is a distinct difference in referring agencies per project. For example, there are projects in which referrals take place nearly exclusively or for the larger part through the basic service provisions and the locally organised preventive provisions. Heerlen is the best example of this. Emmen, Maastricht and Roermond receive many referrals through social work.
In addition it is remarkable that in some project you find 'large-scale suppliers': referring agencies that provide a considerable part or all referrals. This may be related to a good relationship with a referral agency at the outset or developing in the course of the project. For example Heerlen, where the kindergarten, situated in the same neighbourhood centre, is the main supplier. The project in Venray, that linked itself to home care, receives more than half of its referrals through home care, home help and district nursing. The institution that provided the video training liked to refer to Home-Start because Home-Start's support benefited the assistance. In some projects in the volunteering sector the emphasis is also on home care, home help and district nursing. In Roermond Home-Start was set up by the welfare foundation, here socio-cultural work is the main supplier. It must be concluded that there are blind spots in the referring patterns. It seems as if co-ordinators do not use every opportunity to the full and suffer from occupational blindness at times.

What is remarkable: referring agencies must be well informed and kept well informed
The majority of the families end up with Home-Start by intervention from a professional intermediary. Therefore it is essential that the method be well and clearly outlined for the referring agencies, amongst other things: the fact that it is about the family's needs and not the problems that exist in the eyes of the referring agency; and the fact that the support is being provided by volunteers that offer the human touch to the families but are not professionals. In addition, not only the family is to benefit from Home-Start's support, but the volunteer as well. This usually implies that the problems in the families must not be too severe. Families that feel forced by social work institutions to use Home-Start or families that just are 'too difficult' put too much pressure on the coping abilities of the volunteers. Volunteers suffer from burn out or do not enjoy their work so much.

What is remarkable: recruiting and keeping the volunteers
It applies to nearly all projects that the recruitment of volunteers is very time-consuming. There are indications that this is more so in urban areas than in rural areas. On the other hand the experiences in Groningen would seem to contradict this.

As yet the recruitment of volunteers would seem to be a little strenuous. Therefore inspiring examples would be more than welcome. At present it is difficult to say what would be a healthy turnover of volunteers. There is the impression that the projects could, more than they have done so far, invest in

their volunteers. On the one hand in the supervision and support, on the other in tokens of appreciation, pleasure activities and such.

It appears from the experiences so far that trainees and male volunteers are weak links. This also applies to volunteers that have not had much experience of life themselves. Opinions are divided on the question just how suitable volunteers with high levels of education and volunteers with vocational training are for Home-Start, because of their professional background. Finally the method should pay more attention to the recruitment of black and minority ethnic volunteers.

What is remarkable: the need for reviewing among colleagues
It is remarkable that there seems to be a need among many co-ordinators and support officials to have some sort of reviewing among colleagues. Some achieve this in dual co-ordinates, others in intensive co-operation systems with other co-ordinators and support officials. The consultation and support structure also meets this need.

7 To what extent do we succeed in guaranteeing the method?

The essence of the programme evaluation lies in the question to what extent the pilot projects succeeded in maintaining the core of the method, departing from the framework conditions of the Dutch care and welfare sector. Or, in other words, did the method 'hold its own' in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase. Here the emphasis is on the contents: on the quality and effectiveness of the support of families. This means that in implementing and extending the focus must always be on the question to what extent do factors on an organisational –financial- and institutional level support the core business.
This chapter will study the extent to which the projects have succeeded in shaping the support of the families on the basis of the points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements of the method. In case of deviations or adjustments there will be an investigation of the cause and whether there are any ramifications for the quality of the programme.

The Home-Start manual contains the guidelines and quality requirements (Van Dijke, Terpstra and Van Wijmen 1998: 27-34). There are 17 items resulting in 14 quality requirements. These 31 items are not evaluated separately, but arranged in two clusters or related points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements. The first cluster refers to points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements with regard to the method (or the core business).
The second cluster refers to points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements regarding the management, implementation and extension of the method.

From the previous chapter it can be observed that there are variations between the projects. These variations refer to both the method cluster and the extension and implementation cluster. Point of departure is that in the extension and implementation there must be room for flexibility. Particularly so because the care and welfare sector opted for the incorporation of new methods into existing structures and not for the creation of new service provisions or sectors. However, this flexibility should not detract from the method, or pressurise it . The method made its mark and there can be no optional experimenting with the key elements and working principles of the method, as this would affect the very essence of the method.
Therefore this chapter is based on the idea that although there is to a certain extent freedom in the management, there is no freedom in the execution. In short, freedom of management whilst retaining the method.

Cluster 1: the core business
Cluster 1 refers to the points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements with regard to the core business. Key elements of the Home-Start method are:

- the support takes place on a voluntary basis in the families' homes
- the support is aimed at increasing the confidence and coping abilities of the parents, reinforcing the parents' social relations
- stimulating the parents to make a more efficient use more of the present services and provisions
- the willingness of volunteers to enter into ties of friendship with the mother

- the emphasis is on the strong and positive aspects of a family (increasing the strength and decreasing the burden, empowerment)
- a demand-oriented approach in which the mother is in charge with regard to the support
- the volunteers having time at their disposal

Research data show that the method is largely carried out as intended, the intended target group is being reached and the intended outcome is realised. Some elements of the method, however, are more or less under pressure. Other elements of the method could use a more in-depth approach. Both perspectives will be discussed in answering the three main questions concerning the contents:
1 Is the intended target group being reached?
2 Is the intended outcome being realised?
3 Is the method carried out as intended?

Is the intended target group being reached?
A first point of departure is that Home-Start is open to all families with very young children. The research data show that Home-Start NL reaches a considerable diversity of families. By and large this also applies to the separate projects. We can conclude that the projects succeed in presenting Home-Start to referring agencies and parents in a way that it principle no families are excluded. This can be considered as an asset. First of all, because as yet many basic provisions do not reach the target group as often as they should, often because there is a high threshold and a culture and/or language gap. This also applies to many provisions in the field of parenting support. (Klaver and Leseman 1996). In the second place because one of the bottlenecks that has been identified for ages by the care and welfare sector is: how to reach the families that are in a disadvantage socio-economically or socio-culturally (see amongst others Schuyt 1995; Bakker et. al 1997 and 1998; Ministry of VWS 1995 and 1998). We can conclude that in the experimental phase and in the extended experimental phase Home-Start NL lived up to expectations. The programme as a whole and the projects in particular, are ready for an intensified approach with regard to reaching the target group. In this context we will discuss the data of the programme evaluation in greater detail.

The conclusion that Home-Start in principle does not exclude families and is open to all families with young children is justified. However, there are considerable differences between projects, regarding the composition of the target group.
In particular the projects carried out by socio-cultural work and home care manage to reach a large group of mothers with little education (respectively 72% and 74%). The projects carried out by the volunteers sector also reach mothers with little education, but the emphasis is on mothers that have had an intermediate level of education. In addition the percentage of single-parent families, far above the national average in most projects, is striking. On the basis of available data it is hard to say what is the cause of this overrepresentation. No doubt this will be related to the unfavourable socio-economical position of single-parent families in the Netherlands: together with the elderly, single mothers are the poorest category of the population in the Netherlands. And yet we should not be satisfied so soon with such obvious explanations. A possible explanation for the underrepresentation of two-parent families might be that the mother's partner is reserved about 'help from the outside'. It happened that a mother who had registered, later discontinued the support because her partner had difficulty with it.

Finally a possible explanation might be that single-parent families are more prone to be characterised as 'problem cases' by referring agencies than two-parent families. Possibly in two-parent families these agencies tend to assume that the mother will receive support from the partner and tend to overlook isolation or a lack of support in two-parent families.
In addition to the relatively high percentage of mothers with a low level of education and the overrepresentation of single-parent families there is a remarkably high percentage of families that are already receiving some form of social work or counselling. This concerns an estimated 20% to 50% per project. This calls for reflection and a further elaboration of the relationship Home-Start – professional social work provisions.

Whereas a number of projects expressly focus on the fathers in their publicity campaigns, as yet this target group is not being reached. If these projects take themselves seriously they will have to develop new strategies for giving a profile to the method, recruiting the volunteers and referring the families. Generally speaking, if Home-Start wants to be open to all families with young children, it is important always to investigate critically which target group has been secured, why it has been secured and for which target group the current strategies might not be sufficient.

The parenting support provision for black and minority ethnic families is still limited. It appeared from the study by De Haas (1998) that black and minority mothers too are satisfied with Home-Start's support. In the extended experimental phase black and minority ethnic families were reached more often than was the case in the experimental phase. And yet reaching black and minority families on the one hand and supporting them on the other, still appears to be vulnerable. It would be a good idea to investigate if the recruitment of black and minority ethnic families requires different strategies than the recruitment of native Dutch families.
As for the support of black and minority ethnic families it is safe to say that in the care and welfare sector the lack of black and minority ethnic staff is a major bottleneck. Furthermore it can be stated that in the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase Home-Start did not succeed in building up a network of black and minority ethnic volunteers. This is a serious bottleneck, as this causes the support of black and minority ethnic families to become a rather one-sided affair. A Dutch native volunteer could provide support in becoming familiar with Dutch society, but will not, as a rule, be able to be a really good listener in this case.

Is the intended outcome being realised?
From the effects' study carried out by the University of Amsterdam (Hermanns et. al., 1997) in the experimental phase, it appeared that Home-Start was effective. The stress of parenting diminished in families, and there is an increase in parenting skills. With this Home-Start fulfils its promise of the method's contributing to a sound start for (very) young children. However, it must be stated that the effects' study referred to the first three pilot projects. The characteristics of several projects that were set up in the extended experimental phase are very different in a number of respects, to the first three projects. For example, families are being supported for a shorter period of time, the level of education of both mothers and volunteers is higher and the support of the co-ordinator by the support official is less contents-oriented. It is difficult to say if such differences influence Home-Start's effectiveness. From this point of view it would be interesting to carry out another effects' study in due course.

It appears from the same study that the emphasis of the support is on the mother's personal functioning. If this conclusion is compared to the method's objectives, it would seem that in the support of the families the emphasis is on increasing the parents' confidence. The same image is presented in the interviews with the mothers, the volunteers and the co-ordinators. However, the method is based on three objectives:

- increasing the parents' confidence
- reinforcing the parents' social relations
- stimulating the parents to make an efficient use of the available services and provisions.

From the point of view that the methods wishes to support the families to get (or regain) a better grip on their own lives, more attention should preferably be paid to the objectives aimed at the incorporation of the families in informal and formal networks.
In chapter 5 it became clear that experiencing parenting problems is usually accompanied by less support from the social network. At the same time we know that it is this very social network that acts as a buffer to the influence of stress on the parenting climate.

Klaver and Leseman (1996) found that among a large group of parents there are unfulfilled needs with regard to general parenting support. In the course of a year, occasionally over 70% of the parents felt the need for support, nearly always in burdening or very burdening issues, worries or problems in one or more areas of parenting. The majority of this group manages to find support within the social network (48%) or from a professional (52%), the GP being mentioned most frequently. For that matter, the majority of the parents is not satisfied with the support: they either found none, or it was inadequate.

Whereas many parents look for support in the social network, it would appear that stress and tension lessen the ability to make an efficient use of the social network. In particular the families that need social support most, receive it least. This is the method's strong point: it provides families with a (temporary) social network that can act as a buffer for stress and tension on the one hand and helps mothers to build confidence on the other. This support at the same time is temporary. For point of departure is that the parents possess sufficient possibilities to run their families and raise their children under their own steam. From this point of view more attention might be paid to reinforcing the social relations of parents and to stimulating the parents to make a better use of the services and provisions available to them. As for the social network of friends, neighbours and relatives, the support might focus on the question if families can make a more efficient use of the existing network and on the question what possibilities are present to use new support structures. Although the latter question is relevant to all families, it might be particularly relevant for specific target groups. For example families that moved to another town or district, many black and minority ethnic families and refugees and asylum seekers. As for the use of available provisions and services, it must be remarked that not everyone is able to put them to efficient use. Schuyt (1995) stated in this context that many families see the repressive and penalising side of provisions and not the supporting side, as they lack the cultural capital to benefit from the provision. Therefore Home-Start might, more than at present, focus on equipping families to make use of the supporting side of the offer in the formal circuit of services and provisions in Dutch society.
An elaboration of the second and third objective is important, because it will equip families to put their formal and informal network to good advantage, also without Home-Start's support.

For that matter, it appears from the interviews that as a mother's confidence increases (again) the orientation on the outside world increases proportionately. This fact, however, should not detract from greater attention for a family's incorporation in the informal and formal networks. There would be surplus value if Home-Start were to focus on enhancing this 'natural' effect.

In the context of development of working methods, quality improvement and giving Home-Start a profile it seems advisable to distinguish more clearly between the three objectives of the method. At present most attention is being paid to the first objective. By a clearer differentiation between the objectives, the bottlenecks and benefits per objective can be depicted in greater detail and presented. This will reveal in an earlier stage any hiatus in the preparation and supervision of volunteers, regarding the various objectives, any hiatus in the support of the families and information on the method's requiring further implementation and elaboration.
We have already stated that there are indications that the first objective is somewhat neglected in black and minority ethnic families. With regard to 'organising' (new) social support structures, Home-Start NL has a lot to learn from Home-Start UK. In the UK for example Home-Start gives families the opportunity to get to know each other and develop contacts.

In the context of a more distinctive profile for the provision regarding the second and third objective we would like to state a few points of interest.
A first point of interest is how the volunteers regard their role in the families and what their appreciation of it is. Research in England showed (Frost et. al. 1996) that volunteers found it much more satisfying to be 'a good listener' than to provide practical support in the families. The volunteers wanted to be of use to the mother in a social-emotional sense. If this was not the case, the work in the families was felt to be less rewarding by the volunteers. In the experimental phase the volunteers in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray indicated that emotional support was the main form of support they offered the mother. Practical and advisory support were far less prominent. In general the volunteers were satisfied with the support they were able to give (Hermanns et. al. 1997).
A second point of interest is that there is a difference in the need for support on the part of the families. Research by De Haas (1998) showed that many black and minority ethnic families initially stated their demand based on the need to get a better grip on Dutch culture and the Dutch service provision system. Primarily this is an appeal to the first objective. Families in socio-economical and/or socio-cultural circumstances who often lack the cultural capital (resources) to make use of the available services and provisions, might benefit from more attention for he third objective.
In addition it is known that in many black and minority ethnic families, refugees and asylum seekers social isolation is a problem. This can imply that families from these target groups mainly feel the need for support regarding the second objective. In chapter 4 we already stated that for families involved with child and youth care, attention for the social support system seems an obvious choice.

In short, the method requires further elaboration regarding the enhancement of the families' social relations on the one hand and regarding the support of families to make use of available services and provisions on the other.

Is the method being carried out as intended?
The question whether the method is being carried out as intended refers to the methodological principles that are the basis of the core business. In this context, key elements are

- the use of 'fundamental' human qualities and the willingness to form ties of friendship
- the equality of the client who asks for help and the worker who gives help and the voluntary nature of the support
- the support takes place in the family's home
- the question whether social proximity is required
- the forming of mixed group of volunteers
- a demand-oriented approach aimed at 'empowerment'
- investing in the volunteers

The use of 'fundamental' human qualities and the willingness to form ties of friendship
Especially in families with young children problems seem to be correlated to a lack of significant social contacts. At the same time social support is a buffer for the consequences of the problems in other areas of life regarding the parenting climate (atmosphere) in families. Therefore professional social work is not always the only or most suitable answer. Home-Start meets the need for significant social contacts and helps to break the social isolation and to develop social contacts.

In the experimental phase and the extended experimental phase the concept friendship often resulted in internal debate. Most co-ordinators and support officials were enthusiastic about the concept. However, they found it difficult to visualise the implications. What, for example, are the implications for volunteers if they form ties of friendship with a mother and have to say goodbye later on? Is it possible to keep sufficient distance to a family and at the same time to form ties of friendship? In the initial stage the need was felt to closer define the English concept of 'friendship'. All parties involved concluded that the Dutch concept of friendship implies more than the English concept. Most co-ordinators and support officials feel that 'the willingness to enter into friendly relations with the mother' expresses more adequately what is expected of the volunteers than 'the willingness to form ties of friendship'. 'Friendship' or 'entering into friendly relations' is used as a metaphor for the method's key elements such as trust (confidence), equality, humanity and the voluntary nature of the support. Not everybody who takes to Home-Start however, can handle the concept. Sometimes people are sceptical about the concept of organised friendship and feel that friendship can only develop spontaneously. One of the co-ordinators, who had difficulties with the concept, even removed it from her project entirely. A striking detail is that the co-ordinators and support officials who personally did not believe that the support could be based on friendship, were not able to create enthusiasm for Home-Start. With these co-ordinators the projects had a difficult start or dwindled. The support official involved began to focus on other activities and transferred some of her tasks to another support official.
The co-ordinators that have difficulties giving a profile to the programme regarding this point of departure do not succeed in explaining to (potential) referring agencies in what way Home-Start distinguishes itself from professional social work and service provision. Other institutions feel that Home-Start's provision is competitive rather than complementary to their own provisions. This is primarily due to the fact that Home-Start uses volunteers whereas the referring agency works with (expensive) professionals. In addition it raises the question whether volunteers are able to help the families. In short, co-ordinators who themselves cannot use the concept of friendship or are insufficiently equipped to present this, are insufficiently able to answer the questions that referring agencies have regarding Home-Start's unique character.

The same applies to the support officials. If they, for any reason at all, cannot transfer the importance of this concept to the policy makers, politicians or managers, the creation of a basis for the programme usually is less of a success.

Equality between the client demanding help and the worker providing help
This equality is expressed by amongst other things the fact that there is no authority relationship and that the programme makes use of experiential expertise instead of professional expertise. The working principle is 'recognition': the volunteer knows the stressful circumstances and events that a family must face from her own experience. To a certain extent it is therefore purely accidental if you need help or give help. At some other time in a volunteer's life she might have been in need of help, as the mother is now. In addition the programme is based on the principle of reciprocity: the personal growth (development) of the volunteer and the mother is mutual. Or, in other words, not only is the volunteer relevant to the mother but the mother is also relevant to the volunteer. The voluntary nature of the support emphasises the equality and reciprocity.

Support takes place in the family's home
An important element of the method is that the support takes place in the families' homes: a mother invites a volunteer in her home. There is a difference in whether a support worker or social worker is a guest in the family's home or if the parents are the visitors of the support or social worker in an institution. As the majority of the assistance or social work takes place in institutions, Home-Start's provision is a distinct addition to the existing offer.
In the period of 1993-1998 the support took place in the family home in all cases. During the interviews some mothers explicitly mentioned the surplus value of this. They indicated that they liked it that the volunteer could see how things were at home and that there was no need to 'talk about it or explain it'.

Social proximity required?
In describing the method it became clear that Home-Start does not operate in the field of professional social work but in the field of social support. Therefore the provision is given the profile of practical help, friendship and support, in which the volunteers are willing to enter into friendly relations with parents in stressful circumstances. Characteristics of this method for social support are amongst other things equality and trust.
Volunteer and family have to 'hit it off' and therefore matching a family to a volunteer holds a key position in the method. In addition to guidelines for the matching of volunteers and families an actual matching is also based on the co-ordinator's intuition. The more a co-ordinator has matched families and volunteers, the more her skills in this increase, as a rule. A good matching is not based on intuition alone, however, and from a methodological point of view some remarks can be made. Hermanns et. al. found in their research that there are indications that 'volunteers that were like their target group, with regard to education and work experience, also had the best results by and large.' (1997:90) A similar socio-cultural or socio-economical background contributes to the effectiveness of the support. We will now render the opinions of some of the co-ordinators on the question if social proximity between families and volunteers is important to the support.

'It is my impression that recognition is important. It is not absolutely necessary that you have been through the exact same experience. You have your experience and you want to use it. And at the same time you are experiencing personal growth. I do not believe that it is always the case that if the

social distance is small, the chances of success are greater. I think other things are involved: recognition, a sense of humour, living environment, what are your friends like, what type of work do you do or what was your job before? Volunteers must be tolerant and able to 'sit on their hands'. That is an important combination. Equality and friendship are what it is all about. I see no cultural gap here between volunteers and families. The same applies to unpleasant situations. If they won't open the door to you, you're annoyed. I you wouldn't take it from a friend, you won't take it from the family you're supporting.
It is not just the level of education, but other things as well. But if this neighbourhood is not a part of your everyday life, well... You have to be able to feel at home anywhere. Co-ordinators and volunteers should be able to feel at home anywhere.' (co-ordinator)

'I do think that the smaller the social distance the more effective the support. If you have never had any trouble of your own or hardly at all, well, then the volunteers just don't get it. Then they're not flexible enough. A volunteer will tell me: " I've been here for 9 months and still nothing has changed " Then I must explain to the volunteer that she has the wrong attitude. I have one volunteer who has three masters' degrees. She has had a lot of personal difficulties. And she is brilliant. She does not react on the basis of her education but of her own experience. She will say: "I understand how she feels." It is all about not being judgemental, not be prejudiced. That is very difficult for volunteers and it is happening all the time. And, you must be patient. Very often they're not patient enough: they don't see the changes. And then you must explain things.' (co-ordinator)

'Home-Start also puts up my fears that middle class people will dictate to the other parts of town how they should live.' (co-ordinator)

'No, I don't think Home-Start will work better if there is less social distance. You have to be careful with volunteers with a high level of education. They are prone to make a plan and work towards it. And they have high expectations which the mothers can't meet.' (co-ordinator)

'I don't think as a rule the chances of success are greater if social distance is smaller. It's other things that matter. Being close to people and being and staying tolerant. Eventually it is the social-emotional distance that counts and that can be caused by socio-economical or socio-cultural factors but not necessarily.' (co-ordinator)

As research produces indications that a similar background increases the effectiveness of the support, the co-ordinators apparently still worry over the question whether a similar background between volunteers and parents is essential. The data from the programme evaluation show that a similar background will usually contribute to the development of friendly relations and the building of mutual trust and respect. Socio-economical and socio-cultural differences are prone to pressurise this rather than to promote it. Co-ordinators however point out that social distance does not matter (anymore) if volunteers have an open attitude, are tolerant, and have had their share of life experience and are able to 'sit on their hands'. Or, in other words, volunteers that are as it were cut out for the method. However, it appeared from the interviews with volunteers and co-ordinators that this is often not the case. As a rule, this requires specific attention in the supervision and support of volunteers.
It can be concluded that social-emotional, socio-economical and socio-cultural proximity between volunteers and parents is an important supporting factor for the method. It is however not an ironclad

rule. What is clear, is that in cases of greater social distance extra quality requirements are being set to the volunteers.

Compared to the mothers the volunteers in all the work fields have higher levels of education. Departing form the notion that in the matching the social distance must not be too considerable, there are no problems at an intermediate a higher level of education. But at the lower levels there are more mothers than volunteers. The differences are smallest in socio-cultural work. This type of work manages to reach mothers with a low level of education and interest them in Home-Start. In principle 75% of the mothers with lower levels of education can be matched to a volunteer with a similar socio-economical background. In home care and the volunteers' sector this rate is very much lower. Here respectively 38% and 33% of the mothers with lower levels of education can be matched to a volunteer with a similar level of education.
'Look, the location causes us to reach a certain public. We hardly reach any persons with higher levels of education through the community centre. Socio-economically the volunteers and the mothers are alike. But as I indicated this is to do with the location. The community centre does not appeal to persons with higher levels of education.' (co-ordinator)

In the context of the reaching of target groups considered difficult to reach, we must note that it is being attempted to increase the accessibility of provisions for these groups by combining in a single location those provisions that parents and children make use of (for example the community centre, the day care centre, primary education or well-baby clinic). It appears from the programme evaluation that Home-Start Heerlen applies this strategy with considerable success. The project is located in a (very lively) community centre with a great diversity of provisions. In this context it is interesting that no other project received so many referrals from the basic provisions and from the preventative services. In addition, Home-Start Heerlen manages to recruit a great many volunteers from the neighbourhood: to a number of volunteers the community centre is a 'second home'.

After the first recruitment round Leiden appeared to have a rather homogeneous batch of volunteers with relatively high levels of education. For the next recruitment they do not wish to depend on chance so much and intend to focus on new recruitment strategies. Thus they hope to reach the black and minority ethnic volunteers as well as those with lower levels of education.

'The recruitment of volunteers went smoothly. It was a specific group that responded. Our group of volunteers is a homogeneous one. There are mainly volunteers with a high level of education. Next time we will also focus on different group of women. Perhaps in the future we can recruit volunteers with a lower level of education through socio-cultural work. In addition we try to recruit black and minority ethnic volunteers through their own organisations.' (co-ordinator)

A mixed group of volunteers
Earlier on it became clear that a similar socio-economical or socio-cultural background of families and volunteers usually benefits the quality of the support.
The co-ordinators have also frequently stated that volunteers that have had some experience of life are favoured above those that haven't. If volunteers have sufficiently dealt with their personal experiences, co-ordinators will often use volunteers that know the problems from the inside. For example, a mother who has suffered from post-natal depression supports a woman who is in the middle of one.

The fact that volunteers are required to be willing to enter into friendly relations with a mother entails, ultimately, that mother and volunteer must 'hit it off' on a personal basis.
In short, a similar background, having had your share of problems and a 'suitable' personality are characteristics that benefit the quality of the support. If these characteristics are being connected to the point of departure that Home-Start must be available to all families, this requires a diversely composed and mixed batch of volunteers. The method's success depends entirely on a good matching. A 'bad' matching frustrates not only the families but the volunteers as well.

'I will not force a matching anymore. It is better to wait. If a family is in trouble and there hardly are any volunteers to match them with, it is a trap to force a matching. (co-ordinator)

'Volunteers that have to be persuaded to go to a family? I wouldn't do it! You must have the guts to admit that the matching was bad. Volunteers should benefit from it as well. If you have to do things against your liking it won't be good for the family. You lose your spontaneity. In such cases the ending is very important too, so that both parties won't feel disillusioned.' (co-ordinator)

'Yes, I do perceive bottlenecks in the support of families. If there are no new volunteers I no longer have a choice in the matching.' (co-ordinator)

Not only must a co-ordinator have at her disposal a mixed batch of volunteers, she must also have enough volunteers to be able to match at all. For if only one volunteer is available for a newly registered family it is a matter of chance rather than of matching if volunteer and family are suitable for each other.

Demand-oriented approach aimed at 'empowerment'
Analysing problems and coming up with new solutions is often a job for experts. Usually parents are not considered to be able to identify their problems and to come up with solutions. This approach is not always effective. Increasingly the idea is being presented that more attention should be paid to the wishes, demands and needs of the parents. This implies that mothers are in charge of the support. In order to implement this clear working principles were developed: the mother is in charge of the support, the volunteers follow the family's rhythm and families are 'entitled' to their own problems. The support is aimed at the family's strong points and possibilities. As people are beginning to feel better, they are better able to handle the problems they face. Therefore the method focuses on the present strong points and possibilities and not on the problems. To a certain extent it is more important that parents learn to handle their problems than that the (current) problems are being solved.

Earlier on it became clear that a demand-oriented approach is not a matter of course for co-ordinators or volunteers. Primarily due to problem-orientation being predominant in the care and welfare sector as well as the inclination to 'solve somebody's problems' (work hard, compensate shortcomings). A demand-oriented approach requires investing in the volunteers and the co-ordinators: they must learn to do away with what used to be so obvious and adopt an entirely new attitude. The fact that the contents support and the supervision of volunteers and co-ordinators is not always getting the priority it should, puts the pressure on the demand-oriented approach. We should not make light of this, for a demand-oriented approach which emphasises the people is the very core of the method.

Investing in the volunteers

As a volunteers' organisation Home-Start emphasises the volunteers' need for personal growth, friendship and mutual support. Teambuilding is an important element for the volunteers' personal growth and for committing them to Home-Start. Some projects anticipate more distinctly on a joint group sense among volunteers than others: the feeling of belonging to a team, being part of a project and contributing to something special. Perhaps this can best be described as a form of awareness that something unique is being provided, something that distinguishes itself from the service provision of others. Home-Start's own identity is one of the main elements for teambuilding.

A second element is the joint responsibility for the project. In Home-Start's philosophy the co-ordinator and the volunteers form a team: volunteers are not just 'carrying out' but they have their say on the course and progress of the project.

A third element, finally, is that the Home-Start team can act as a social network for individual volunteers, to which they can turn for support and friendship. A team that looks after its members. These three elements commit the volunteers to Home-Start.

Whether we succeed in making a team from a loose bunch of volunteers depends primarily on the co-ordinator's skills in this respect. The separate projects are very different here. Some projects pay more attention to creating team spirit than others. Some projects do not emphasise team spirit so much as personal contacts between the co-ordinator and individual volunteers.

For teambuilding the regular, monthly meetings are very important. But also activities not directly linked to the job, such as having lunch together or joint activities or outings. And joint presentations of Home-Start at seminars or conferences promote team spirit. Another example of a binding activity is participation of all Home-Start's volunteers of the experimental phase in a joint trip to the UK.

In the longer lasting projects this sense of belonging to a group was more obvious than in the 'younger' projects. Sometimes this theme had not been an issue yet or was a point of interest for the near future. The pioneers also expressed the need for team building more emphatically.

It must be noted that many professionally organised institutions often pay little attention to arranging 'extras' for the volunteers. Money is often a problem here.

Quality and differentiation

Fervour and success are inspiring and raise the question whether the concept might not be used for other target groups. Sometimes it also raises the question if it is necessary to stick to the points of departure so much. Why should you restrict yourself to families with at least one child under the age of six? Families with children of primary school age or families with adolescents have stressful circumstances as well and could use some support. One of the co-ordinators on the subject:

'It is important that Home-Start sets its boundaries clearly. For example the six-year age limit. You observe that things change in a family when a child is six and has to go to school. With good reason does Home-Start opt for this period and you have to stick to it.' (co-ordinator)

One could apply similar reasoning to several of Home-Start's guidelines and points of departure. There is a certain risk involved in forever stretching the limits. In the future Home-Start NL will have to arrive at consensus on the question of the exact position of the boundary lines.

In addition, everybody can be inspired by the concept. If people want to let go of the guidelines and points of departure that is alright as long as they don't claim to be Home-Start.

Cluster 2: management, implementation and extension

In the course of time there has been some debate on the exact position of Home-Start. For example, it has been advocated to implement the method in welfare work as this sector would provide the best conditions to put Home-Start into practice: low-threshold, at neighbourhood level and experienced in working with volunteers. Others have advocated implementing the method in the volunteers' sector because the philosophy and mode of operation in this sector are similar, by and large, to Home-Start's. The (curative) child care, however, would not be suitable: high-threshold and a strong emphasis on cure instead of care.

In the implementation, extension and management however we opted for accommodating Home-Start in one specific sector or organisation or for the creation of a new provision. Point of departure was that it does not matter much who does it but especially how they do it: is host or hostess willing and able to carry out the method as intended and to create the framework conditions for it. That is why in an early stage we opted for disconnecting the 'management' from the contents. Every institution willing and able to create adequate framework conditions for a project, with regard to staff, finance and means, can set up a Home-Start programme. In short, freedom of management but not of execution.

This point of departure is being supported by the effects study carried out in the experimental phase. This proved that there were considerable differences in the way in which the projects were directed and organised. However, this did not result in distinct differences between locations regarding results achieved. 'It can be supposed that the actual execution on the level of volunteers and co-ordinators was fairly uniform due to the preparation and supervision structure. Differences in organisational accommodation or management matter less, then.' (Hermanns, 1997: 91)
Hermanns attributes Home-Start's success primarily to the fact that the execution in the various projects was fairly uniform. There was agreement and enthusiasm on all levels on the basic philosophy and the mode of operation to be observed.

The developments regarding the management, implementation and extension will be tested by means of the question to what extent they:

- warrant freedom of management
- warrant execution of the method.

Consultation and support structure

By opting for the system that the method can be carried out by various sectors and fields of work Home-Start NL has not made things easy for itself. For this choice implies that the consultation and support structure must be set up in a way to ensure that 'everybody' has a place in it, regardless of the organisation that facilitates the consultation and support structure. Or, in other words, the consultation and support structure must be such that institutions from various sectors have a place in it. The institution(s) that facilitate or manage the consultation and support structure must guarantee a broad-based approach and look out for the possibilities and framework conditions of the various fields of work and sectors. The consultation and support structure has at least the following functions:

1 transfer, implementation and consultation
2 support of local projects
3 creation of a basis for the method and development of a network (at a local, regional and national level)
4 quality monitoring
5 achievement of consensus on development of the method and strategic policy

Before we discuss the developments in the Netherlands a brief outline of the way in which the consultation and support structure is set up in the UK. In England Home-Start is an independent organisation. The projects are autonomous and organised at the local level. In addition there is a national Home-Start organisation, that facilitates amongst other things the consultation and support structure; takes care of courses, training and the improvement of skills; and is engaged in development of product, work and quality. Form the national bureau regional support officials have been appointed for he support of the local projects. They must also monitor quality. A support official takes care of 15 to 20 projects.

In the UK all new Home-Start projects are registered at the Charity Commission. With this they accept the points of departure, guidelines and working methods of the programme. In addition they commit themselves to maintaining contact with Home-Start UK on the one hand and with other Home-Start projects on the other. The relation between Home-Start UK and every Home-Start project is based on co-operation and trust. Point of departure is that good communication is fundamental to the consultation and support structure and is decisive for the success of the method.

Alterations in the guidelines, points of departure and quality requirements are not laid down by the national organisation but are presented to the entire organisation. Point of departure is that there must be consensus on policy shifts, guidelines for the practice, framework conditions and such.

It is clear that it is not advisable, and in fact not possible, to copy the English consultation and support structure for the Netherlands. For here, too, structure matters less than does the content. Therefore point of departure is that the content's principles, that are the basis of the structure, must be warranted in the Netherlands as well.

The underlying principles are: openness, trust, exchange and consensus. The organisational concept is based on the idea of the learning organisation and equality of all parties involved. Consultation structures are set up in a way to ensure that there is reflection on the work in the families and on the organisation on all levels. Point of departure is that all parties involved –from volunteers to national support structure- contribute to the development of the programme. This requires an open attitude, the willingness to exchange with others and to achieve consensus on essential issues. The regional support officials are the link between the projects and the national level. Decision-making takes place on the basis of consensus.

Incorporation within the existing structure of service provision

In the experimental phase the NIZW and Symbiose facilitated the consultation and support structure for the projects in Heerlen, Maastricht and Venray. In the extended experimental phase the NIZW remained responsible for the support of the projects in Limburg. With regard to the support structure

however, there was a blank because as yet no conclusive agreements had been made on the way in which this had to be implemented (outside Limburg), whereas a start had already been made with the extension. In fact the support structure was left to 'the market'. This entailed that the organisations that played a part in the implementation and extension of Home-Start, had their employees attend a preparatory course for Home-Start support official. This involved employees of a major national association for volunteering, employees of support organisations in the welfare sector, employees of Spel and Opvoedingsondersteuning (Play and Parenting Support, S&O) and employees of larger welfare foundations. On the one hand this contributed to the method's being known in wider circles, on the other it led to fragmentation of the support. For example, in the extended experimental phase every project in Zuid-Holland had its own support official.
On the basis of the project description it already appeared that this resulted in the support of the local projects being 'arranged' to a large extent within their own circles: on the one hand within the concerned circles in the welfare sector (VSW-institutions and S&O); on the other within the infrastructure of the national organisation for volunteering. The projects in Dordrecht and Leiden were an exception. Whereas these projects were connected to the volunteering sector, they were supported y a VSW-institution and S&O.

When in 1998 NIZW transferred its directing role in the consultation and support structure to 'the field of work' a vacuum was created, to a certain extent, on the national level. The Ministry of VWS in the meantime granted a two-year subsidy to the national association Humanitas for the development of a National Support Centre Home-Start. This Support Centre started its activities on 1 December 1998.

The point of departure that in the implementation and extension Home-Start is to be incorporated in the existing infrastructure in the area of care and welfare, has been met. However, it clearly is a structure in the process of being developed, by no means complete. Therefore it is hardly surprising that there should be bottlenecks. We will name some.

One of the bottlenecks is, that there are many support officials with relatively smaller institutions. This entails objections. In smaller institutions the investment necessary to participate in the national consultation structure is out of proportion to the limited number of hours available for Home-Start. If priorities are to be set, consultation is not always the first option.
If every project has its support official or if support officials have a small number of projects, it is difficult to make the experiences of one project benefit another. In addition it is difficult to acquire an overall picture of developments and it is more difficult for the support official to build up sufficient expertise.

Another bottleneck caused by the incorporation in the existing infrastructure, is the risk of overlap in consultation meetings. In practice the co-ordinators and support officials of the national association of volunteering meet, for example, in the association's internal consultations. During these meetings the developments concerning Home-Start will usually be on the agenda, as a result of which some people involved will feel it to be double work to participate in Home-Start consultations of co-ordinators or support officials.
The reverse also happens: the executing institution will expect the Home-Start co-ordinator to participate in the regular institutional consultations. If a co-ordinator performs no other activities for the organisation, this is sometimes felt to be a burden.

A final bottleneck that occurs is that the interests of people's own organisations and those of Home-Starts are not always kept separate properly. For example, the national volunteering organisation would insist powerfully on growth in the initial phase, and seemed to 'forget' that there were other projects not set up by their own organisation. This caused resentment among the pioneers in Limburg. The overlap of organisation interests and the interests of Home-Start is a bottleneck that requires constant attention. In this context some co-ordinators stated that they preferred an independent organisation to monitor quality.

'There is great need for this kind of provision. What is so likeable is the human touch. It is a pity that our institutionalised society will make simple things so complicated. Here the connection of Home-Start to the institution is a vulnerable issue. The institution's profile comes blundering though it. No organisation should lay a claim. I would advocate taking time out. So, no growth for a while but evaluating and emphasising the contents. As yet, too little has fully developed.' (co-ordinator)

Support and quality monitoring

An important element of an 'all-round' quality system is that co-ordinators are given a sound preparatory course and support in 'establishing' the method. In short, that they are not left to themselves and have to find out for themselves what it means for the volunteers' work to 'sit on your hands' or to 'go with the family's rhythm' or indeed what 'friendship' or 'friendly relations' implies. Many co-ordinators indicate that they feel the need for this. However, there may be considerable differences per region and per support official whether a project is actually getting support, how much time was allowed for the support and if the support refers to the method and the core business.

The organisation concept is based on the concept of the learning organisation. With this, Home-Start opts for a dynamic instead of a static approach in its method: the idea is to learn from the experience of the parents, volunteers, co-ordinators and support officials and to gain new insight into the points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements. In this approach of quality development the regional support officials hold an important position. They bundle the experiences gained in the projects, resulting in the creation of a (national) picture of successes, bottlenecks and developments and of aspects of the methods that have yet to be elaborated on. For quality development it is important to achieve consensus on the question which are the critical success factors of the method. Then it can be decided which quality requirements projects and support structure have to meet.
The next question must be how the quality requirements are to be guaranteed. A rigid system of quality monitoring does not suit the method. Inspection for example would be alien to the organisation culture. Home-Start NI will have to develop a quality system on which there is consensus at every level. The preference is for a system of self-regulation, an internal system of quality monitoring. Or, in other words, a system in which the Home-Start projects, the regional and provincial support officials and the national support centre, come to an agreement together.

Implementation and extension

Joint agreements on quality requirements and meeting them also provide the opportunity of giving some direction to the developments in the framework of implementation and extension. Because (as yet) there are no clear agreements on what (still) is and what is not (anymore) a Home-Start project, it is to a certain extent everybody's responsibility to decide what is possible (still) and what is not (any longer).

For example, in 1997/1998 initiatives were taken to accommodate the projects of Home-Start and MIM (Mothers Inform Mothers) in one single project, under the responsibility of one co-ordinator. It remains to be seen if the initiators fully understand the implications of their choice. For Home-Start it is important to ask the question if such projects should (be allowed to) operate under the colours of Home-Start. In any case co-ordinators worry about such developments, according to the following quotations.

'Guaranteeing the quality is the only way in which Home-Start can distinguish itself from other forms of assistance and support. There are so many agencies engaged in providing help and support. Home-Start must not be one of a crowd. The target group must be clear and the working method as well. Personally I am aware of the risk of proliferation: use of the name, neglecting the points of departure... the trap is that friendship is being neglected or forgotten.' (co-ordinator)

'I think it is very important that the guidelines and mode of operation of Home-Start are guaranteed properly. That you don't get stuck or become a mere extension of agencies. The point is that it is all about the mother. For example, you must always ask them if they have discussed with the mother what they are discussing with you.' (co-ordinator)

'For Home-Start's quality, adequate training, intervision meetings and uniformity of the contents are important. A national steering committee could act as guard dog. Proliferation should be prevented. The guidelines and quality requirements should be point of departure. It should only be allowed to deviate from these after careful consideration in a national steering committee. A committee like that should always test the quality requirements.' (co-ordinator)

'The quality is in the contents: low-threshold, standing besides people, humanity, not threatening, approaching people simply and without some sort of message. The emphasis is on the people, not on the problem.' (co-ordinator)

Nearly all projects meet the framework conditions such as number of full-time hours and the availability of support by now. It is time to take the next step in the implementation process. With regard to the method, Home-Start NL will have to decide whether, and if so, how, they want to implement a 'guard dog' role. Thus Home-Start can get a grip on the extension and prevent the method from becoming diluted.

Freedom of management whilst retaining the method

As point of departure for management, extending and implementing the choice was in favour of 'freedom of management whilst retaining the method'. The developments in the extended experimental phase show that the way in which Home-Start is developing in the Netherlands leaves room for freedom of management. The coinciding of institutional interests with Home-Start's interests is a weak link sometimes (still). From this perspective the national support centre will be particularly alert to being representative and reliable for all Home-Start projects, regardless of the field of work or sector from which they were set up.

With regard to the method, there is the paradox that –due to the appealing and congenial philosophy and mode of operation- there is a great deal of interest in the programme. At the same time the method is under pressure regularly. Thus Home-Start is running the risk of losing its own identity.

Therefore Home-Start will have to get a better grip on the developments regarding implementation and extension, in particular where the guaranteeing of the method is involved. In this respect agreements will have to be made on the implementation of an internal system of quality guaranteeing.

8 Conclusion

Is Home-Start the method it pretends to be?

Home-Start appeals to very diverse families. The percentage of black and minority families is increasing slowly. It is an asset that the method has the ability to reach native Dutch as well as black and minority ethnic families, that are often characterised by institutions as 'difficult to reach'. This concerns categories of families that often have reservations about the 'interference' of agencies and are therefore difficult to reach for the institutions.

It can be concluded that Home-Start manages to reach a large diversity of families. In principle the approach does not exclude families. Nevertheless, the participation of certain target groups is still vulnerable and this should be tackled. The participation of men has been discussed a lot, but as yet it has not been witnessed.

It is Home-Start's objective that stressful circumstances or events should not develop into severe and lengthy problems and that parents can go on under their own steam. Home-Start hopes to achieve this by:

- increasing the parents' confidence
- reinforcing the parents' social relations and incorporation of the families in social support structures
- encouraging families to make an efficient use of available services, provisions and arrangements.

From the data of several studies the image emerges that the method is successful in increasing the parents' confidence. The method's contribution to the reinforcement of informal and formal support structures is less clear and differs per project. This is a pity, because the social safety net that the volunteer is providing to the family is temporary. From a prevention perspective it is important to support parents with the development of skills, which will enable them to make a better use of social support structures and of provisions and agencies.

The programme evaluation shows that mothers can turn to Home-Start with a wide range of support questions. For the larger part the questions and problems are concerned with the mother's personal functioning. Black and minority ethnic mothers often (also) feel the need for support in becoming familiar with Dutch society. The degree of satisfaction with the support is high. The Home-Start concept shows that 'fundamental human qualities' such as attention, time, optimism, a sense of humour, respect and a listening ear can counterbalance stressful circumstances in families. In this respect the method fulfils its promise: volunteers do not put themselves in the position of professional organisations for social work and service provisions and the method is complementary to the existing service provision.

The adequate matching of families and volunteers is crucial to the quality of the support and the degree of satisfaction of the mothers. Social proximity between a mother and a volunteer, in a socio-cultural and socio-economial sense, supports the method's principles of work. In this context the difference in level of education between mothers and volunteers is a point of interest. The recruitment of volunteers with a relatively low level of education is not easy, as a rule. In addition the recruitment

of black and minority ethnic volunteers requires attention. That is why we recommend to pay explicit attention to the recruitment (and following that to their supervision and support) of specific categories of volunteers.

The open door a pitfall

In the extended experimental phase Home-Start also appears to be feasible and successful. The points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements are appealing and simple. Therefore the impression is sometimes created that these will be applied 'as a matter of course' and have (long) been incorporated in the organisation's culture. As a result of this there is at times not enough reflection on the implications of concepts such as 'sitting on your hands', 'going with the family's rhythm' or 'the family is in charge'. People don't realise sufficiently that these concepts deviate from the usual practice in the care and welfare sector and therefore require constant reflection. This applies to both the professional and the volunteering sector.

Within and without Home-Start there is a substantial basis for the body of ideas. However, as yet there are few methods in which concepts such as demand-oriented approach have been translated into guidelines and working principles for the people on the job. In this respect the Home-Start projects can be numbered among the pioneers in the Netherlands. This is a vulnerable position, requiring more attention than it is actually receiving.

It also demonstrates that caution is the word here. Although on average Home-Start's position is solid in the Netherlands, in the projects there are often deviations or adaptations of which it remains to be seen if they are in the same colour range or if gradually an entirely new colour range is developing. In itself that is not objectionable, but if this trend continues the question arises if some projects can still be called Home-Start.

Nibbling at the method's points of departure

Per project there are differences. Some of these differences are within the latitude the method provides. But there are also differences in execution, that may affect the very core of the method's working principles. This concerns, amongst other things, differences per project regarding:

- relation in co-ordination hours, number of volunteers and number of families;
- nature of the batch of volunteers;
- duration, intensity and nature of the preparatory course for volunteers;
- the way in which the support and supervision of volunteers is being implemented;
- team-building: making the volunteers co-responsible for the execution of the project;
- attention for the attitude of parties involved;
- the voluntary nature of the support;
- composition of the target group;
- average duration of the support to families;
- the extent to which the work is done in a demand-orientated manner;
- the realisation (or lack of it) of reviewing among colleagues;
- paid appointment for the job of co-ordinator;
- the number of full-time hours for the co-ordinator;
- the project's being low-threshold and accessible;
- a sound network or referring agencies.

- referral patterns;
- a clear profile of the project -as new and additional provision- with regard to other services;
- incorporation in and matching of local infrastructure;
- presence of a local working group and/or steering committee;
- management that rises above the level of institution or type of work;
- the way in which the support structure for co-ordinators is being implemented;
- the openness in the communication of successes and pitfalls;
- the colouring of the project by the type of work or sector to which a project is connected;
- participation in regional and national consultation and support structure.

The points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements can be put under pressure because in daily practice co-ordinators face dilemmas, for which they choose pragmatic solutions in the interest of the project's progress. For example, co-ordinators supporting families themselves; shadow-courses for one or two volunteers; entering volunteers in families before they have completed the preparatory course; not participating in consultation and support structures.

The points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements can also be put under pressure because executing institutions opt for the minimum version or a version 'as cheap as possible', due to which there are insufficient possibilities to uphold quality aspects. For example, too few full-time hours to be able to invest substantially in volunteers, to participate in the regional and national support structure or to set up a local working group. Another example is the combining of Home-Start with other by and on behalf of methods, without creating framework conditions for this.

Finally, the points of departure, guidelines and quality requirements can be put under pressure if in the extension and implementation the balance shifts towards growth in stead of quality and contents.

The programme evaluation showed that in projects in which the points of departure are being put under pressure, this reflects on the project's functioning. Amongst other things, with regard to the recruitment and 'holding on to' volunteers and with regard to the profile in relation to the volunteers.

We observe the paradox that due to the appealing points of departure there is a great deal of interest for Home-Start, whereas on the other hand these very points of departure are put under pressure. Thus Home-Start runs the risk of having to relinquish its own identity in the long run, in order to become a somewhat colourless volunteering project.

If the success is being set against the nibbling away at the method's points of departure, we advocate a carefully balanced process of development in which the emphasis is on retaining the method and guaranteeing the quality.

As there is no independent Home-Start organisation in the Netherlands, the institutional interest and Home-Start's interest do not always coincide. This causes a certain friction. The national support centre Home-Start, which will start per 1 December 1998, can play an important part –being a contents' platform- in retaining the quality aspects and preventing the balance to shift towards growth instead of quality and contents.

Implementation and extension

The interest for Home-Start requires reflection. A project's success can easily become a pitfall. Enthusiasm is at times so great that people are eager to start the project, even if it is not possible to meet every (quality) requirement and framework condition. If a method has insufficient opportunity to crystallise out there is the risk of everyone implementing the programme 'as they see fit', causing the philosophy and the points of departure to become diluted. Therefore it is important that a project is not merely appealing, but also that there be consensus on the way in which the philosophy and points of departure are being implemented in daily practice. A consensus model takes time, energy and attention for the process.

The method's perspective

The University of Amsterdam reports on the experimental phase that 'the execution on the shop floor by the volunteers went well and was in line with Home-Start's points of departure and that on the level of the co-ordinators there were a great deal of enthusiasm and a few problems (apart from a lack of time), but that on the institutional level mistakes were made: neither within nor without the institutions enough was done about establishing Home-Start firmly' (Hermanns et. al. 1997:87). The co-ordinators of the first three pilot projects criticised the way in which their own and other institutions' efforts on behalf of Home-Start's continuation and extension (see Hermanns et. al. 1970. In the extended experimental phase this criticism became even more severe. Co-ordinators emphasised that growth received too much attention at the expense of an intensified approach to contents and basis. In addition there was criticism of the fact that institutional interests were at that time prevailing over the interest of 'producing' a qualitatively sound programme.

The policy perspective

Home-Start responds to current developments in society and policy and matches current innovation in child care such as a demand-oriented approach, early assistance in people's own surroundings and family-oriented parenting support. It shapes the 'as.. as' policy. The core of this policy is that child care should be as low-threshold and light as possible, as short as possible and as near the home as possible. This implies that no extra means should be used, but that some of the 'heavy' and specialised forms of child care must be transformed into lighter forms of non-residential assistance and prevention. In the past few years there has been widely supported consensus on the necessity of fortifying prevention and lighter forms of assistance. Before problems have become set, or a way of life.

Home-Start's benefits are not exclusively in the area of one specific institution or sector, but on the intersection of (child and youth) care and (youth) health care and (youth) welfare work. Home-Start's 'mission' is in preventing parenting problems, while the assistance is not oriented specifically on children or parenting problems, but on the parents. The immediate results manifest themselves in the mothers' and fathers' lives. That is why the results are relevant for assistance work, social work, health care, welfare work, et cetera.

Home-Start has a distinct surplus value for the care and welfare sector. The programme evaluation is not only relevant to Home-Start itself but can also be relevant for the realisation of the wide-ranged approach of parenting support, which pays attention to the framework conditions for parents (or, in other words, the terms of employment for parents). In addition the method provides relevant information for a development, in which the aim is for a greater differentiation in assistance and service provision: from professional forms to paraprofessional and voluntary forms of assistance and

service provision. Finally the programme offers perspectives to reach families that find themselves in underprivileged circumstances socio-economically and socio-culturally.
Home-Start proved its power of expression: a practical, feasible method that can be transferred. In that sense the childhood stage is over. In future, we must be alert to preserving the method. For the followers of the Dutch 'polder model' there is sufficient room for variation. However, there are limits to the latitude. If the limits are being stretched further and further, there will be the risk of Home-Start's not being able to guarantee the quality any more. It is a challenge for the future to decide the latitude on a basis of consensus.

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How does a successful programme remain effective? A method or programme is seldom carried out exactly according to the guidelines. People 'on the job' will often be obliged to make concessions to the quality requirements because they keep running into bottlenecks in daily practice. Therefore there must be room within a programme for adaptations to the local situation. However, a crucial question is whether these 'adaptations' do or do not detract from the quality and effectiveness. In the long run, there is always the risk that the programme will have to give up its identity more and more, and a rather colourless project is all that remains.

This programme evaluation refers to the introduction and implementation of Home-Start in the Netherlands. Over twenty-five years ago the method was created in the UK as an addition to the professional care and service provision. Home-Start supports families with young children in order to prevent everyday problems or stressful circumstances developing into major or long-term problems. Thus Home-Start contributes to a good start for children. The programme does not focus on the children in a family or on the parent-child relationship but on the parents. The programme was developed for parents and ordinary human qualities such as a sense of humour, friendship and being able to listen or to give practical support are the basic ingredients.

In recent years the programme was introduced in various countries within and without Europe. In 1993 Home-Starts was set up in three pilot projects in the Netherlands. During the experimental stage the programme was successful and effective. Research showed that the parenting stress in families diminishes and that the parenting competence and confidence of parents increase.
The method swiftly became well-known on a national level in the Netherlands and by now there are Home-Start projects in many locations. This programme evaluation describes the bottlenecks and successes that occurred in the first five years, after the introduction. In addition it discusses the lessons that can be learned from it.

The information is not just relevant to people involved in Home-Start but also to others engaged in family support, social support structures around families, parenting support and youth policy. Furthermore, this publication provides information to those involved with the development of methods and implementation.

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